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14 Ways To Laugh
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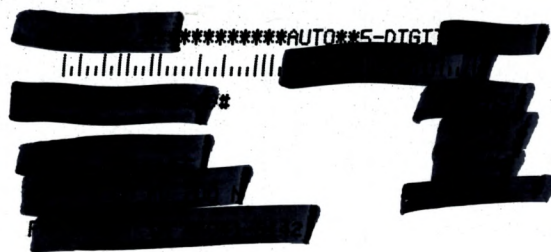
**YOUR LIFE
IN A BOTTLE**

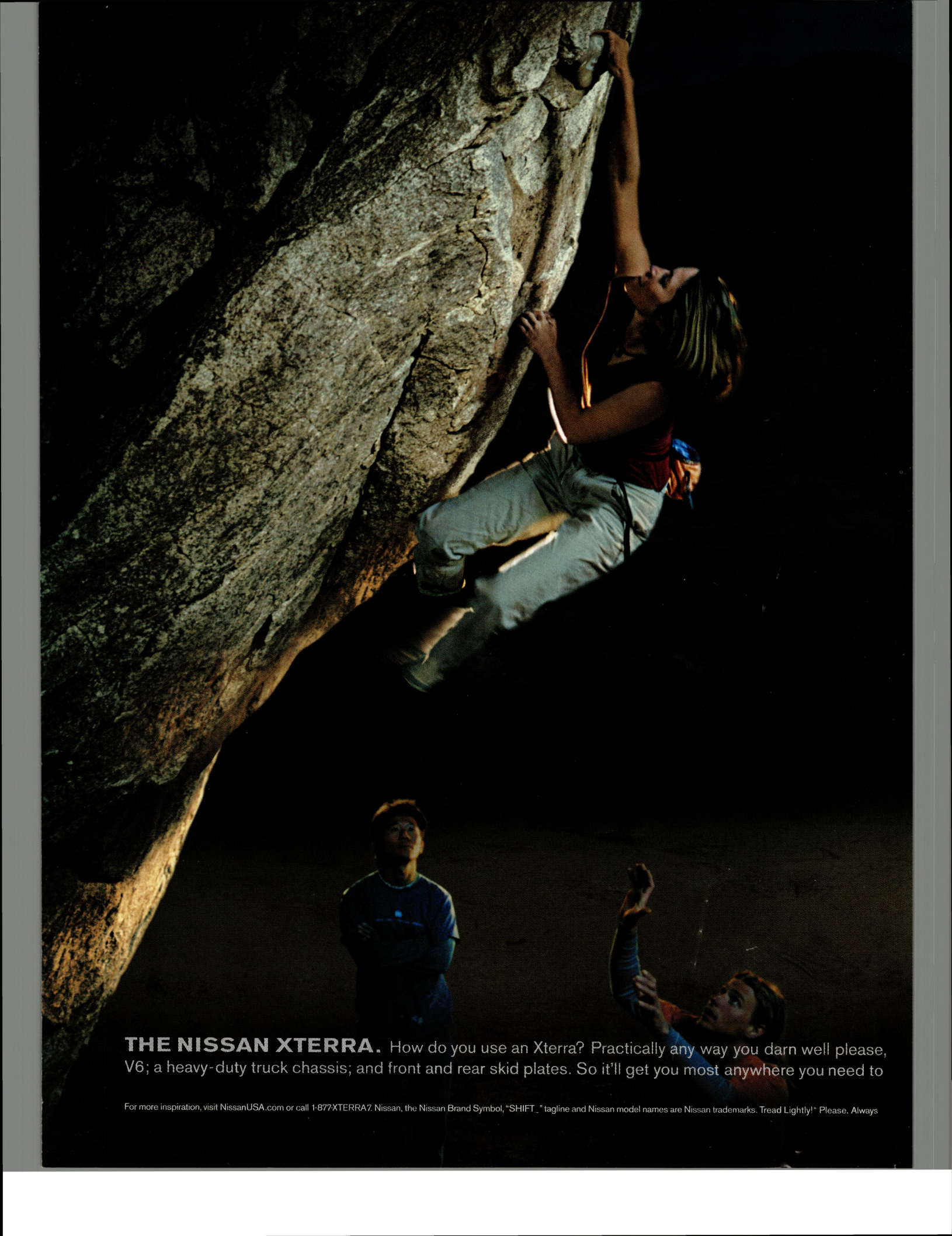
The Case for
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Paddling off Cayman Brac, Brett LeMaster and Colette Kubichan set their own schedule and choose their own sites.





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DIVING

50

Five full-foot fins that will really move you.

50 Full-foot Fins In part two of our comprehensive fin test, our test team divers kicked a dozen tropical models in the warm currents of Cozumel to find the five hottest pairs of full-foot fins. *By John Brumm*

DIVE LOG

56 Dominican Republic With all-inclusive resorts, world-class diving and inland adventure, the eastern half of the Caribbean's second largest island isn't just for Europeans anymore. *By Stephen Frink*

62 Kayak Diving Picture this: You're the captain, navigator, engine, divemaster and diver all rolled into one. Talk about freedom. We show you the gear and the skills you'll need, and the best sites to use them both. *By John Francis*

LESSONS FOR LIFE

68 Swimming Upstream An out-of-shape, ill-prepared diver panics in strong ocean currents. The result is not surprising. Learn how you can avoid her mistakes. *By Michael Ange*

ON THE COVER: Photograph by Tim O'Keefe.



RODALE'S SCUBA DIVING

THE GREAT DIVES

15 KICK BACK, relax and enjoy a virtual tour of three of the world's best dive sites. **This month:** Cozumel's wreck of the C-53, British Columbia's Browning Wall and Tobago's Kelleston Drain.

CURRENTS

22 THE HUMAN BAITBALL To a pack of hungry, 100-pound tuna, underwater cameraman David Reichert looks like lunch. **Plus:** Baywatch meets the Sphinx, and a dive light to end all dive lights.

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72 GEAR & THERE An excellent gear setup for current diving, and a moving place to use it.

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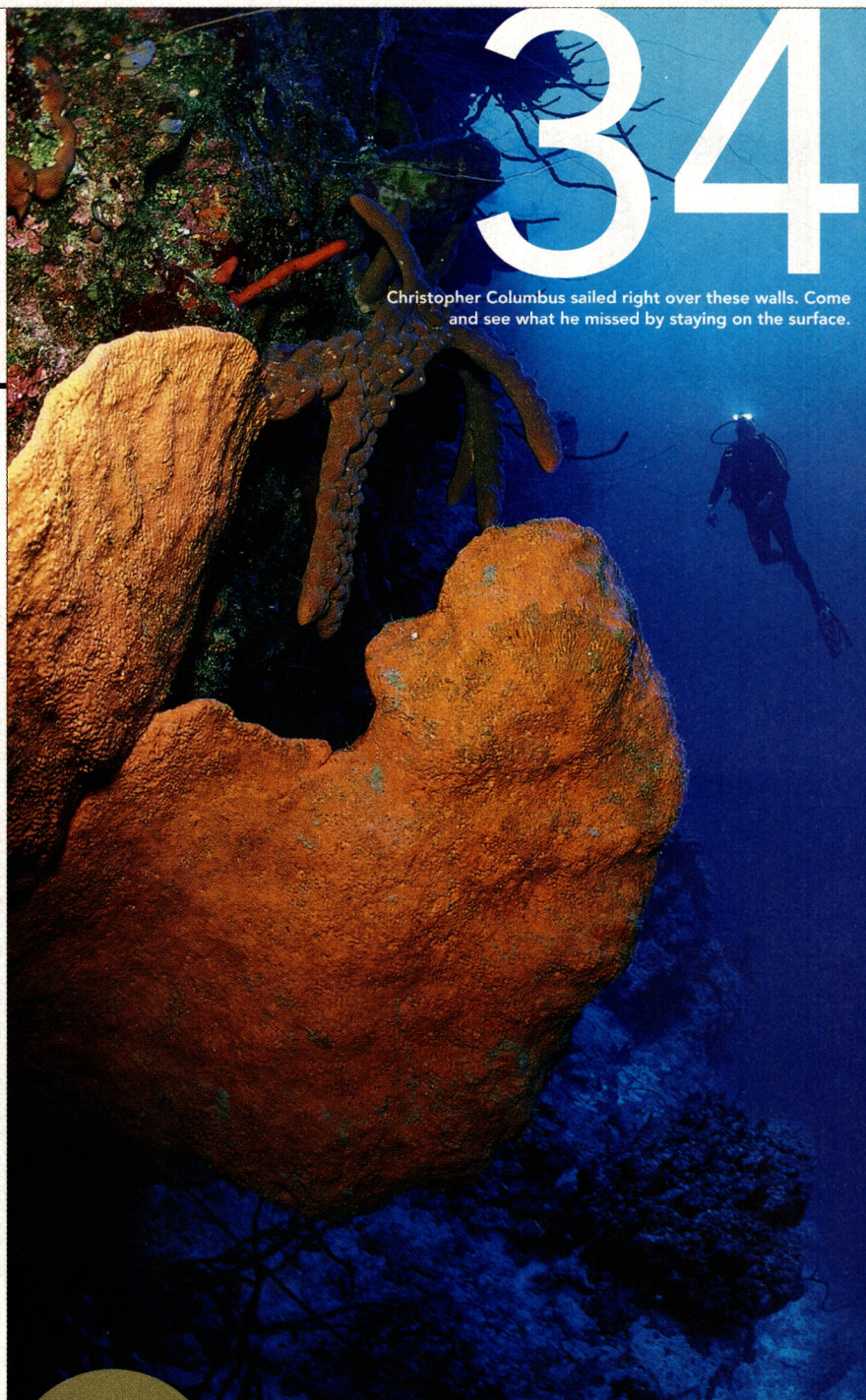
77 SHOOTING SHARKS Tips for capturing killer photos of the ultimate predator.

85 DON'T FEED THE FISH Motion sickness strikes 90 percent of us. But there are ways to go to sea without getting sick.

88 STRANDED AT SEA What should you do when you surface to an empty ocean?

93 YOUR LIFE IN A BOTTLE Short of breath? Not with a bailout bottle.

96 Q&A You may save money buying gear online, but at what cost?



Christopher Columbus sailed right over these walls. Come and see what he missed by staying on the surface.

TRAVEL

34 CAYMAN ISLANDS Ever wonder what the islands' reefs looked like 500 years ago? It's time for you to go see for yourself.

42 THE BIG OCEAN'S BEST Our readers rate their favorite Pacific resorts and dive operators, from Hawaii to Palau and Fiji.

7 TALK 41 10 THINGS 83 SNAP 107 IN DEPTH 112 LOOK

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PLUNGE INTO A PANORAMA OF EXOTIC UNDERWATER ENCHANTMENTS:

SWIM AMONG SCHOOLS OF ANGELFISH, TRACK THE HUNDRED-FOOT DROP OF A

MASSIVE WALL, EXPLORE IMMENSE GARDENS OF STAGHORN, ELKHORN,

GIANT BRAIN CORAL, AND THE EXTREMELY RARE BLACK CORAL. JOURNEY THROUGH A



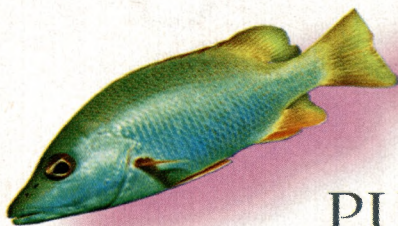
*You're not
dreaming
You're in
Puerto Rico*

MAZE OF ANCIENT CAVERNS, ALLEYWAYS, AND TUNNELS. SPY ON AN OCTOPUS.

FOLLOW A SEA TURTLE. THEN AFTER SUNDOWN, SIT BACK TO AN EXQUISITE DINNER

BY CANDLELIGHT OVERLOOKING THE WAVES. SEEM LIKE PARADISE?

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T A L K

(TRIBUTE)

Paul Tzimoulis, 1936-2003

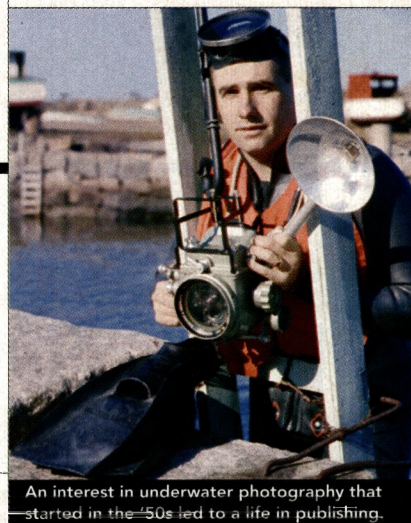
Diving pioneer and publishing legend. **BY STEPHEN FRINK**

IN 1953, DIVING WAS THE ULTIMATE extreme sport. You couldn't buy a demand regulator or take a PADI certification course or join a bunch of your friends on a live-aboard dive boat. But if you were a 17-year-old kid passionate about the world beneath the waves, you could do what Paul Tzimoulis did and convert an old Air Force oxygen rebreather to stay down longer than you ever could freediving.

Those first experiences in the cold-water lakes of Connecticut changed Paul's life, but in a profound way created an industry as well. Like few other people, Paul Tzimoulis shaped recreational diving as we know it today.

Paul's career included stints as a scuba instructor and as a dive retailer. But more than anything, he was a communicator and was compelled to share his love of the sea. With an Argus C3

camera in a plastic bag, Paul took his first underwater photos. As technology and his skills improved, he added words to photos, and in 1959, his article "Sponge Diving, Scuba Style" appeared in *Skin Diver* magazine. From that baby step, Paul graduated to a 34-year career as the guiding force behind *Skin Diver*. It was because of his writing and photographs that many of us learned of and were



An interest in underwater photography that started in the '50s led to a life in publishing.

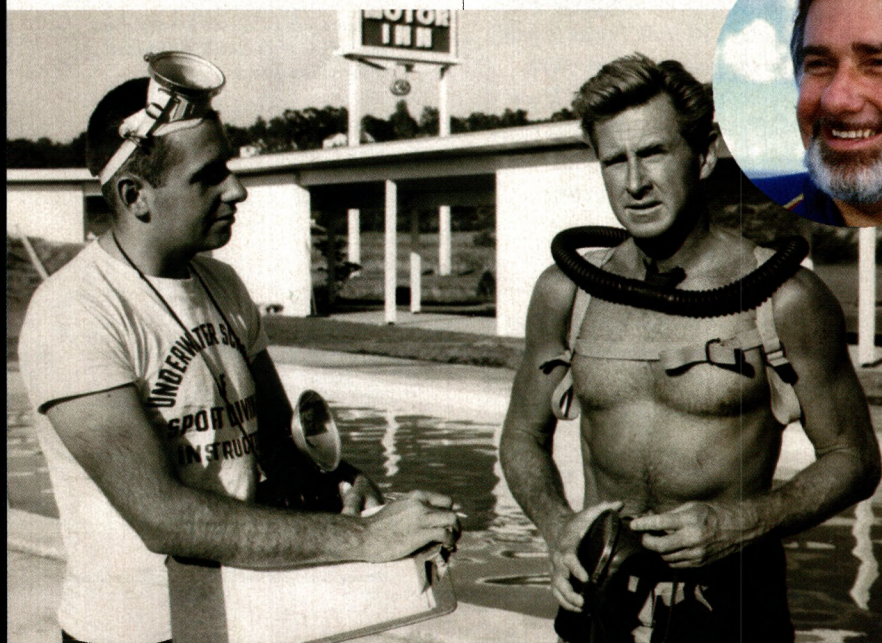
inspired by the wide world of dive travel.

In 1971, I was in graduate school in California, and by means of the vicarious thrills I got every month through Paul's *Skin Diver* articles, I decided to give scuba a try. No doubt a whole generation was similarly engaged, but I was fortunate enough to be mentored by Paul during my 17 years as a contributing photographer to *Skin Diver*.

His two passions in life were his wife Geri, and his absolute devotion to recreational scuba. He wanted his friends in dive equipment manufacturing, instruction, photography and dive travel to prosper. As a fiercely competitive businessman, he wanted his publishing ventures to rule as well. And during the height of his reign at *Skin Diver*, they did.

My last conversation with Paul was on the phone, from an airport, while still pursuing the underwater path he set me on. I knew he was terminally ill at the time, but it was so like Paul to put me at ease and change the conversation from what could have been morose to a reflective celebration of his life and times. Even in his final days, Paul was preoccupied with what he considered his work in progress: recreational diving.

The truth is that dive travel, dive publishing and, in fact, the recreational dive industry as we know it today would not exist without Paul Tzimoulis.

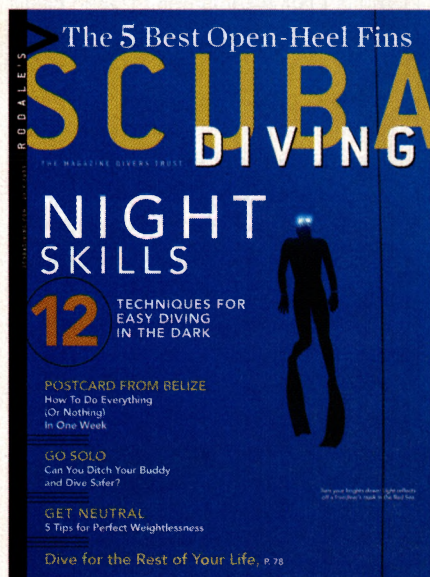


PHOTOS COURTESY OF GERI TZIMOULIS

(LETTERS)

Solo Support

THANK YOU FOR YOUR informative look at the issue of solo diving ("Should You Go Solo?" July '03). There have been many times in my 17-year diving career that I've been tethered to a buddy who I didn't know and didn't feel comfortable diving with. Too often, I feel like a babysitter for a diver with less experience. I spend these dives distracted by two thoughts: Is this buddy going to do something that puts us both in danger? And, if I'm in trouble, is he going to be any help? Thank you for supporting an idea that is a taboo subject in some quarters of the dive industry. **Noel McNeal, Denver, Colo.**



Old, but Not Worn Out

I WAS CONFUSED by an item in "The Numbers" (page 12, June '03). You stated that 24 percent of the divers surveyed said their regulators were more than four years old. You gave the impression this was an undesirable practice. Three of my four regulators are at least that old, but all are high-performance regs, which I have serviced annually. Is there any reason I shouldn't be using these? **via e-mail**
> Not at all. We didn't mean to imply that you should toss out a perfectly good, though older, regulator. If you maintain your regulator with care and have it serviced annually, you should be able to use it for years to come.

Redesign:

Point/Counterpoint

FINALLY! A design that lives up to the high-quality articles and information you provide. It's beautiful! **Charles Benton, Lake Charles, La.**

WHY DID YOU SCREW UP a perfectly good magazine? The new format sucks! **Howard Bowles, Utah**

> Can't we all just get along?

(THE NUMBERS)

BREATHLESS

25%

Percentage of divers who have forgotten to turn their air on before entering the water for a dive, at least once.

LET'S DO THE WAVE

77%

Percentage of divers who consider scuba diving a "sport."

HOCK-P'TOOEY!

40%

Percentage of divers whose mask defogger of choice is produced by their saliva glands.

DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE MISSING

52%

Percentage of divers who say they've never experienced nitrogen narcosis.

(Source: Surveys of users on www.scubadiving.com)

(HOW TO REACH US)

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DIVE OF THE MONTH

1 C-53, COZUMEL. Floating like a skydiver, you drop down over the hulking wreck of C-53. Originally commissioned as a minesweeper, C-53 spent time as an anti-drug patrol boat, troop transport and search and rescue ship. Almost 200 feet long, she is intact and safe to penetrate. Glassy sweepers, grunts and a large population of lobster shelter in her holds.



A full-page photograph of a scuba diver swimming over a diverse coral reef. The diver is positioned in the upper left, silhouetted against the blue water, with a bright light reflecting off their mask. Below, the reef is covered in various corals, including large green sponges and dense patches of red and orange soft corals. The water is clear, and the overall scene is illuminated by natural light from above.

(BRITISH COLUMBIA)

Browning Wall

2 ONE OF THE BEST WALL DIVES in North America, Browning Wall begins 100 feet in the air and then plunges 250 feet under water. It's a current-swept site that is covered with a healthy population of orange and red soft corals, giant *Metridium* anemones, nudibranchs, crabs, starfish and urchins. Uninhabited real estate here is scarce: Larval invertebrates are constantly seeking space to set up housekeeping. Even when the calendar says August, the green water of Queen Charlotte Strait off Vancouver Island is cold—about 48F at depth in late summer—and a dry suit is a must.



2 A dive light transforms the soft corals on Browning Wall into a bright blanket of color.

3 Nutrient-rich waters keep this super-sized specimen of *Colophyllia natans* healthy.

(TOBAGO)

Kelleston Drain Brain Coral

3 **THIS IS YOUR BRAIN** coral on drugs: 10 feet tall and 16 feet across, the giant formation at Kelleston Drain is one of the largest known of its species in the world. Like El Capitan at Yosemite, this looming boulder is the star attraction of this classic drift dive over a long plain of lush coral. The site is located off the northeastern Atlantic coast of Tobago, where strong and sometimes conflicting current make this an advanced dive. You'll be pushed along at a depth between 30 and 50 feet, before the reef slopes off sharply. **SD**

GET THERE

> For information on operators who can

get you to these sites, turn to In Depth, page 107, section 1.

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PowerShot S400 DIGITAL ELPH



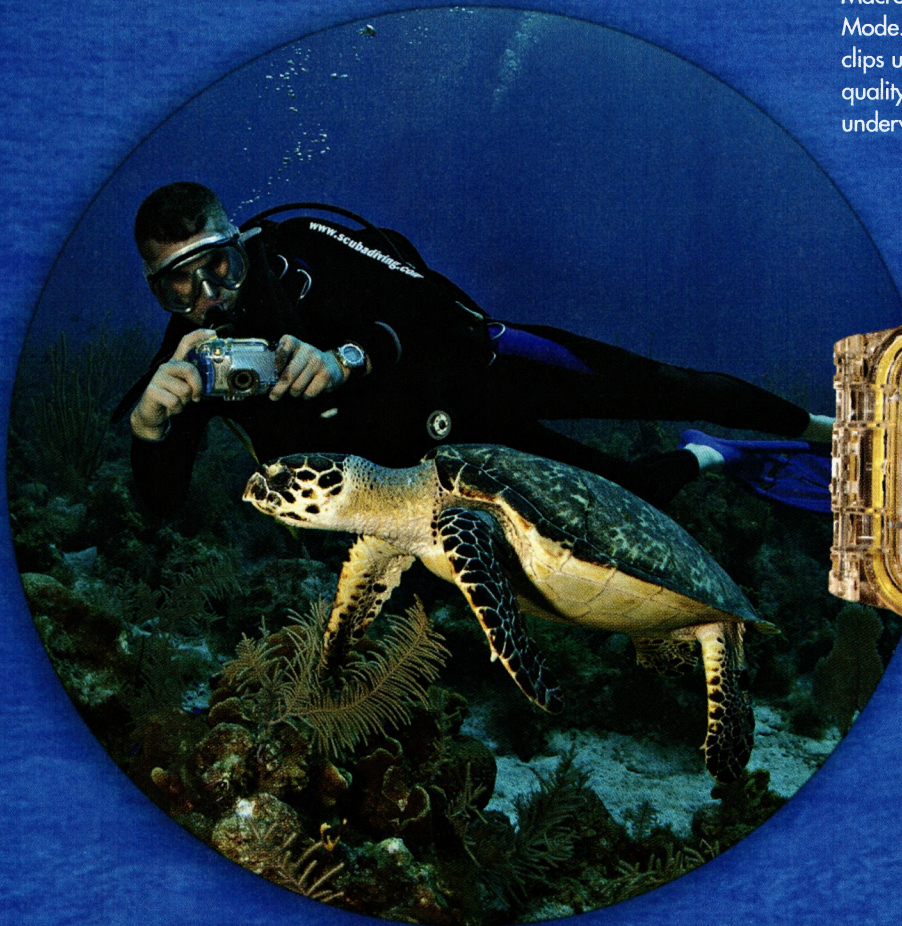
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It's simple to capture underwater surroundings with the Digital ELPH and its advanced set of features. This brilliant digital camera produces high quality resolution with 4.0 Megapixels for sharp and vibrant photos, a powerful 3x Optical Zoom for pinpoint focus, and a durable, stylish metallic body for added protection.

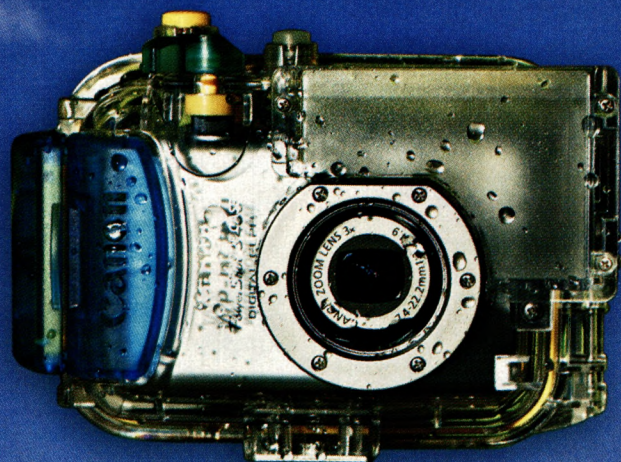
The optional Waterproof Case WP-DC800 is the perfect accompaniment to the Digital ELPH. This housing unit withstands depths as great as 130 feet. Now you can capture, share, e-mail, or even print your digital photos.

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Canon Revolutionized Digital Photography

Even with its outstanding optics and 4.0 Megapixel imaging sensor, it's the DIGIC Image Processor that's the heart of the PowerShot S400. Unlike other competitors who use generic image processors, Canon designed the DIGIC Image Processor specifically for Canon digital cameras. The results: images with sharper detail and less "noise", superior color, faster camera operation from start-up to autofocus, and even superior battery life.



A related Canon technology, iSAPS, instantly analyzes the type of scene that's being photographed. Armed with this data, the DIGIC Image Processor can provide even better focus control, white balance, color, and exposure. Above or below the surface, the Digital ELPH will show you how Canon technology has revolutionized digital photography.

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Once back on the surface, the fun continues. The Canon Card Photo Printer CP-300 is the easiest way for divers to print their photos on the spot. Connect the PowerShot S400 to the CP-300 **directly** — no laptop necessary! The process only takes 85 seconds for a picture-perfect 4"x 6" print (that doubles as a postcard), plus you also have the option for credit card-sized prints and stickers. Add these photos and stickers to your logbook or mail them across the world to friends. It's compact, portable, and easy to carry to any diving destination.

.....

You've got the facts. You're ready. Now make these additions to the gear list for your next dive:

- ✓ PowerShot S400 Digital ELPH
- ✓ Waterproof Case WP-DC800
- ✓ Card Photo Printer CP-300

After all, it only makes sense to let Canon, the company that revolutionized digital, introduce you to the exciting world of underwater digital photography.

To find out more, visit: www.powershot.com/underwater



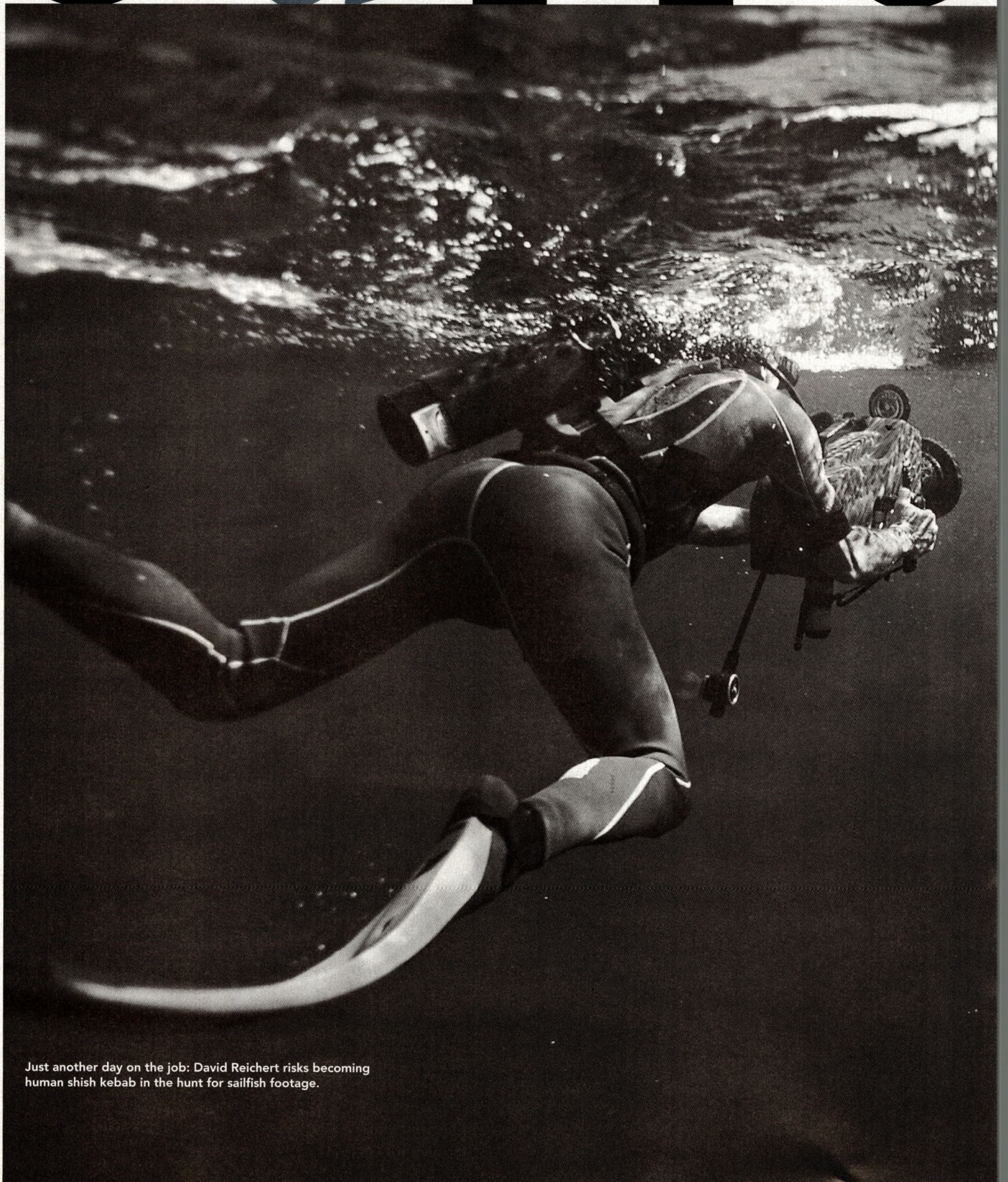
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CP-300

- Connect, Select, Print: controlled entirely from the camera
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Curre



Just another day on the job: David Reichert risks becoming human shish kebab in the hunt for sailfish footage.

n t s

(JOBS WE WISH WE HAD)

The Human Baitball**David Reichert gets the shot.**

Over the boat engine's whine, the captain shouts, "Go! Go!" Underwater cameraman David Reichert leaps into the open ocean, gripping his 65-pound camera, scrambling to film a huge baitball of sardines. Thousands of the frantic fish swirl toward the surface, herded by a school of large tuna rocketing up from below.

Everything was fine, recalls Reichert, until a desperate group of sardines swarmed him. "There is no swimming away from panicked sardines," he says, so he just kept filming as 100-pound tuna streaked in like missiles. "I was pretty scared."

Fortunately, he escaped unharmed and nailed a five-minute segment for the Discovery Channel series "Blue Planet: Seas of Life." But for a moment, Reichert had to rethink his career choice. "I thought maybe I should have gone to grad school."

After earning degrees in physics and math, Reichert was pursuing a master's degree in environmental engineering when he became an assistant to wildlife cameraman Shane Moore. Certified since age 15, Reichert enjoyed the underwater shoot so much he put graduate school on hold. Eight years later, Reichert heads his own production company.

Being the boss, however, doesn't exempt him from becoming a human baitball or spending as much as 10 months at sea for a few minutes of footage. "There's loads of boredom and frustration, but there's also anticipation that something amazing will happen," he says.

Between shoots, Reichert lives in Wyoming, where he usually downplays the risks of his job to family. "As far as my mom is concerned, I just swim around and take pictures of pretty fish." —PAT WUEST

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID REICHERT

SCUBADIVING.COM 23

(JUST IN)

At Ease, Soldier Attention all active-duty U.S. military personnel: The folks at Sandals and Beaches Resorts are giving away \$2 million in free vacations to say thanks for your service. Download an "Operation Relax" application at www.sandals.com or www.beaches.com, fill it out and return it by Aug. 9. If your application is selected, you'll receive a certificate for a four-day/three-night ultra-inclusive stay (that means food, booze and diving are included—sweet!) at the company's resorts in Jamaica, Antigua, St. Lucia, the Bahamas and the Turks & Caicos Islands.



(PREDATOR)

Killer Eyes

Ever feel like you're being watched?

It can detect 100,000 colors; you can see 10,000. It can sense ultraviolet and polarized light; you're blind to both. And it can strike and maim you 50 times faster than you can blink your inferior eyes.

Lucky for you, this ferocious beast is, well, shrumpy.

Mantis shrimp have the most complex eyes in the animal kingdom, and according to biologist Roy Caldwell, they use them to guide lightning-fast jabs with their powerful front legs. Some varieties have nasty spears for skewering small fish; others have powerful clubs for smashing crabs. All have a short fuse. Mantis shrimp have been known to knock heads off in fights over burrows, and at least one diver has lost a finger after handling one of these tiny Terminators. —PAMELA TURNER

(STAT)

\$31,000,000

Amount Congress appropriated for fiscal year 2003 to dispose of obsolete ships in the U.S. Navy "ghost fleet." Legislative changes now allow those funds to pay for preparing ships as artificial reefs.

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(DISCOVERY)

Mistaken Identity

See the world's smallest (for now) seahorse.

Move over, *Hippocampus bargibanti*. A newly identified seahorse has claimed the title of "world's tiniest." Biologists say the half-inch creatures they previously assumed were just juvenile pygmy seahorses (*bargibanti*), are in fact adults of an entirely different species, *Hippocampus denise*. A quarter-inch shorter than its cousin, *denise* has a longer snout and less prominent bumps. Fame may be fleeting, however. Scientists are working to identify an even tinier seahorse discovered this year off Australia. —MARLI WAKELING



Meet *denise*.

(TOPSIDE)

TAKE A HIKE

Making a splash in Dominica.

The Carib Indians who settled Dominica got it right when they named their home Wai'tukubuli, or "tall is her body." Flowing from the island's seven volcanic peaks are more than 300 rivers and streams that make for the Caribbean's best waterfall hiking. One of the easiest treks is Emerald Pool, a 10-minute stroll inside Morne Trois Piton National Park. The stream plunges 40 feet through the rain forest into a lush gorge that's perfect for swimming on hot days. Dominica's other waterfall hikes range from the work-up-a-nice-sweat 20-minute Trafalgar Falls hike, to the some-body-call-a-cardiologist 90-minute trek to towering Middleham Falls.

—TOM R. JAMESON



Paradise found: Emerald Pool.

MARLI WAKELING (TOP); TOM R. JAMESON (BOTTOM)

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(TOY)

HIGH BEAM

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It's designed for rescue teams and Navy SEALs, but there's no reason you can't arm yourself with the Long Arm RI-2400—the world's most powerful handheld waterproof searchlight. The six-million-candlepower beam on this optical enforcer takes 15 to 20 seconds to reach full power, but produces a white light with a blue light shift, making all colors as distinct as if in sunlight. The Long Arm weighs five pounds and measures 18 inches long, so you use it slung from your shoulder like a locked-and-loaded Uzi. Price: \$2,500. Contact: Reva International, (800) 800-7382. Web: www.revalighting.com.

—JOHN BRUMM

Now where did I put my dive bag?

(BUZZ)

Living Large in Tobago

Beginning in October, Peter Hughes Diving will offer live-aboard dive cruises around the island of Tobago on the *M/V Wind Dancer*. Departing from Scarborough, cruises will make a clockwise sweep around the island known for swift currents and fishy reefs. "I personally challenge any diver to find bigger or healthier corals anywhere else in the Caribbean," says Hughes.

GET MORE



For more information on items in Currents, turn to In Depth, page 110, section 7.

(QUOTE)
All you've got to do is strap on a tank and go down.
It's a freedom that most divers never experience.

—DAVE FELTON, OF THE BUFF DIVERS SCUBA CLUB, AS QUOTED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, REGARDING THE JOYS OF NUDE DIVING.

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L I F E



(FISH ID)

What's This? When the dive is over and you need to burn three to five minutes in the shallows of your favorite Caribbean reef, get face down in the sand and look for this month's mystery fish. This rail-thin member of the blenny family often dwells in worm tubes surrounded by sand, rubble and tufts of seagrass. The males of the species have bright blue markings on their throats, but this particular guy isn't displaying another telltale feature: a prominent dorsal fin decorated with both dark and yellow spots on the first spine. When you find this fish, you should be able to move in for close inspection. It's generally unafraid of divers who approach slowly.

t h e A N S W E R

 Bluethroat pikeblenny (*Chaenopsis ocellata*).

And where, with over 250 dive sites
to choose from, are we just
scratching the surface?

Could it
be
Cayman?



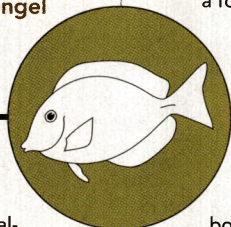
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**CAYMAN
ISLANDS** 
Grand Cayman • Cayman Brac • Little Cayman

the DIFFERENCE

How to distinguish between two species. This month: A perfect angel and its nearly perfect impostor.

The sea never ceases to amaze. While exploring the soft-coral-covered reefs of Fiji this spring, I spied a bright yellow miniature angelfish, commonly known as a lemonpeel, flitting around a boulder spill at the base of a towering bommie. It wasn't until

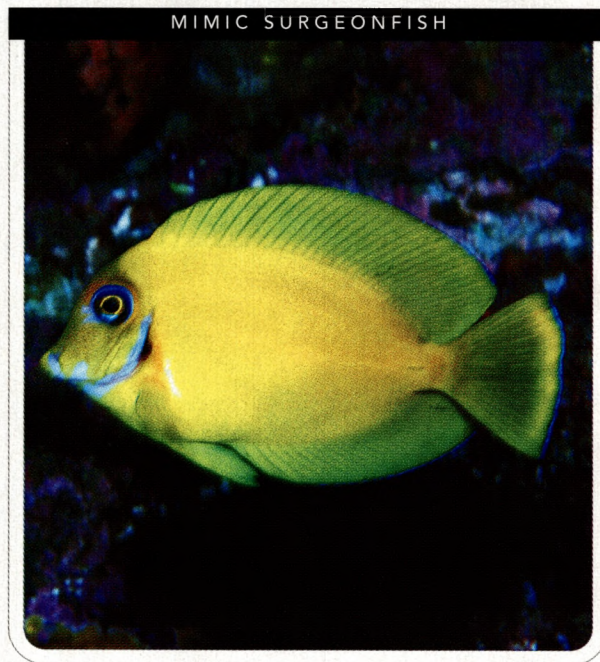


I got home that I realized that I had been completely fooled by a four-inch impostor.

A close examination of my underwater images with a magnifying scope and the counsel of a reef fish identification book revealed the ruse:

The striking little lemonpeel angelfish, *Centropyge flavissimus*, turned out not to be a lemonpeel at all. In fact, it wasn't even an angelfish; it was a juvenile mimic surgeonfish,

MIMIC SURGEONFISH



New Backyard

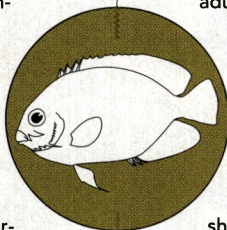
Sunday 11:00am

Well its done ...
I hope I have a job when I come back...
I just wish I could have seen their faces...
I think "sabbatical" was a good choice ...
"Adventure" may have been a bit too brash.

Acanthurus pyroferus. The lack of a prominent spine on the gill cover, a diagnostic feature common to all angelfishes, gave the mimic's gambit away.

I read further to learn more of the story. As it turns out, juvenile mimic surgeonfish not only mimic lemonpeels, but also have the ability to impersonate other small angelfishes in genus *Centropyge* that bear entirely different color and marking schemes.

I also discovered that there's another surgeonfish species, this one from the Indian Ocean, known as the Indian Ocean mimic surgeonfish, that pulls off



a similar charade by mimicking angelfish species that inhabit its region of the sea. Not surprisingly, as soon as the juvenile surgeonfish outgrow their angelfish models, their colors begin to change into the drab brown of adult surgeonfish.

Scientists believe the deception helps deter predators that normally avoid cryptic little angelfishes armed with razor-sharp cheek spines. The clever charade provides a bit of protection for tender young surgeonfish born into a hostile world of hungry mouths.

—PAUL HUMANN AND
NED DELOACH

LEMONPEEL ANGELFISH



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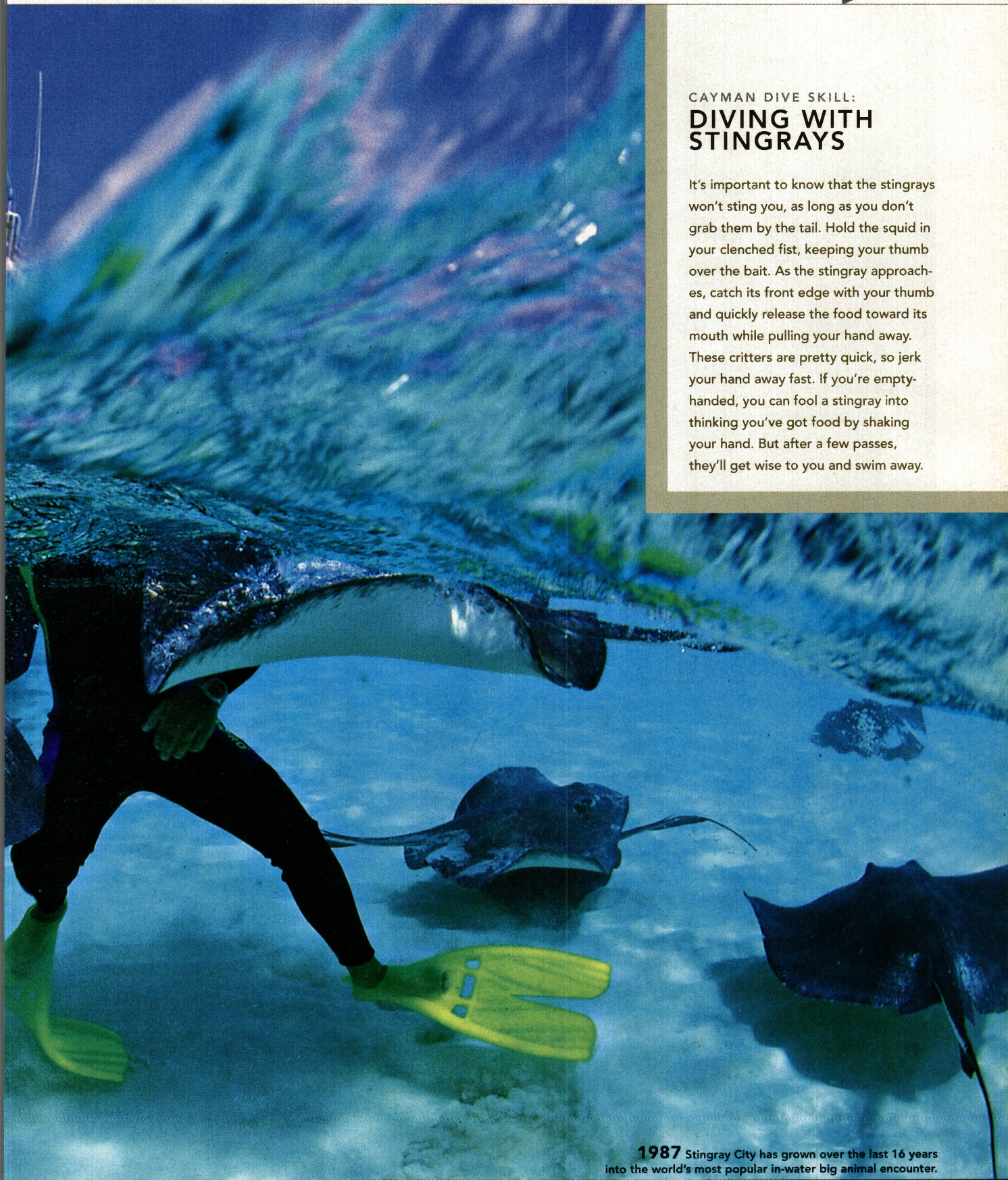
Wonder what the Cayman Islands' walls looked like when Columbus stopped by 500 years ago? See for yourself. **BY NICK LUCEY**

DIVE INDUSTRY PIONEERS started greeting cruise ship passengers on Seven Mile Beach in the 1950s, with hopes of ushering them to Grand Cayman's reefs and into scuba's golden age. While people in other parts of the world were looking quizzically at frogmen in rubber suits, divers on the Sis-

CAYMAN DIVE SKILL:

DIVING WITH STINGRAYS

It's important to know that the stingrays won't sting you, as long as you don't grab them by the tail. Hold the squid in your clenched fist, keeping your thumb over the bait. As the stingray approaches, catch its front edge with your thumb and quickly release the food toward its mouth while pulling your hand away. These critters are pretty quick, so jerk your hand away fast. If you're empty-handed, you can fool a stingray into thinking you've got food by shaking your hand. But after a few passes, they'll get wise to you and swim away.



1987 Stingray City has grown over the last 16 years into the world's most popular in-water big animal encounter.



CAYMAN DIVE SKILL: NAVIGATING A WRECK

Descend to the wreck and pause to orient yourself. If the wreck is scattered, there's even more reason to figure out where you are so you can return there. Find a visual aid—a winch, anchor or gun turret. Pick a route that returns you to the starting point. Use an out-and-back pattern, or circle the outside of the wreck. Remember to save air for a slow, controlled ascent, and always perform a three- to five-minute safety stop at 15 feet. Master these skills and you'll be ready to come back to dive Shipwreck City—the Cayman Islands' plan to sink five more ships.

1996 The *Capt. Keith Tibbetts*, towed from Cuba and sunk off Cayman Brac, became this hemisphere's largest diveable Russian warship.

ter Islands were naming dive sites. Not much has changed since then. There are more resorts and loads of dive operators now, posher restaurants, more flights and thicker traffic, but the dramatic walls and the dizzying marine life are as beautiful and prolific now as they were when Christopher Columbus dropped by in 1503.

Perhaps the greatest thing about these

islands is that they are so many things to so many divers—newbies and old salts, techies and snorkelers, die-hards and been-there, done-thats. Whether you like pretty reefs or intriguing wrecks, shallow dips or deep walls, big animal encounters or little critters, you'll find something here for you.

Grand Cayman

THE LARGEST, most populous and thoroughly developed of the three islands, Grand Cayman is typically where Cayman Island vacations begin. The 22- by 8-mile chunk of limestone shoots almost straight up from the seafloor, with wall diving on all four sides. The most popular area is along the western edge, where resorts abound and conditions are typically calmest. The north is dived less frequently and has bigger animals. The south is where operators usually go when the west side is blown out, but it also has some awesome walls. The East End is a destination all its own, about an hour away from Seven Mile Beach and West Bay Road.

What Makes Grand Cayman Unique

RESTAURANTS, SHOPPING AND NIGHTLIFE > All the American fast-food chains are on Grand Cayman, but there's also a range of haute cuisine choices. Seafood, Italian and Asian restaurants are among the hottest places to nosh. Seaside bars are popular during the day, and nightclubs and discos are the place to see and be seen at night. Interested in shopping? Any island with 500 banks is going to offer plenty of places to spend that cash.

SHORE DIVING > Eden Rock, Cemetery and the wreck of the *Cali*, as well as Cobalt Coast, Sunset House, the Seaview Hotel and Coconut Harbor's house reefs, are all popular places to wade in and blow bubbles.

4 Timeless Dive Sites

ORO VERDE > The "Green Gold" was loaded with marijuana when it was seized and scuttled off Grand Cayman's western shore. Often overlooked by experienced

STEPHEN FRINK (PREVIOUS SPREAD & LEFT)



Picking the day's dive sites on the Brac.

STEPHEN FRINK (TOP); MACDUFF EVERTON (BOTTOM)

divers, it's time to rediscover the *Oro Verde*: Plenty of structure and tons of fish mean cool photo ops.

BABYLON > If you've got the energy, you can do this one as a shore dive (it's about three football fields offshore), but it's more easily dived by boat. The northeast's rugged ironshore gives way to a tumbling wall with coral pinnacles that are perforated by swim-throughs, tunnels and caves.

IRONSHORE GARDENS > This East End site is shallow, a brain coral-covered

mini-wall that drops off to a labyrinth of passageways and cracks filled with horse-eye jacks, tarpon and glassy sweepers.

THE BALBOA > Smack dab in the heart of George Town Harbor lies the scattered wreckage of the *Balboa*. Get here by dusk to get a feel for the wreck in the fading light. When the sun goes down, the coral polyps come out, as well as octopuses, crabs, lobsters and squid.

Cayman Brac

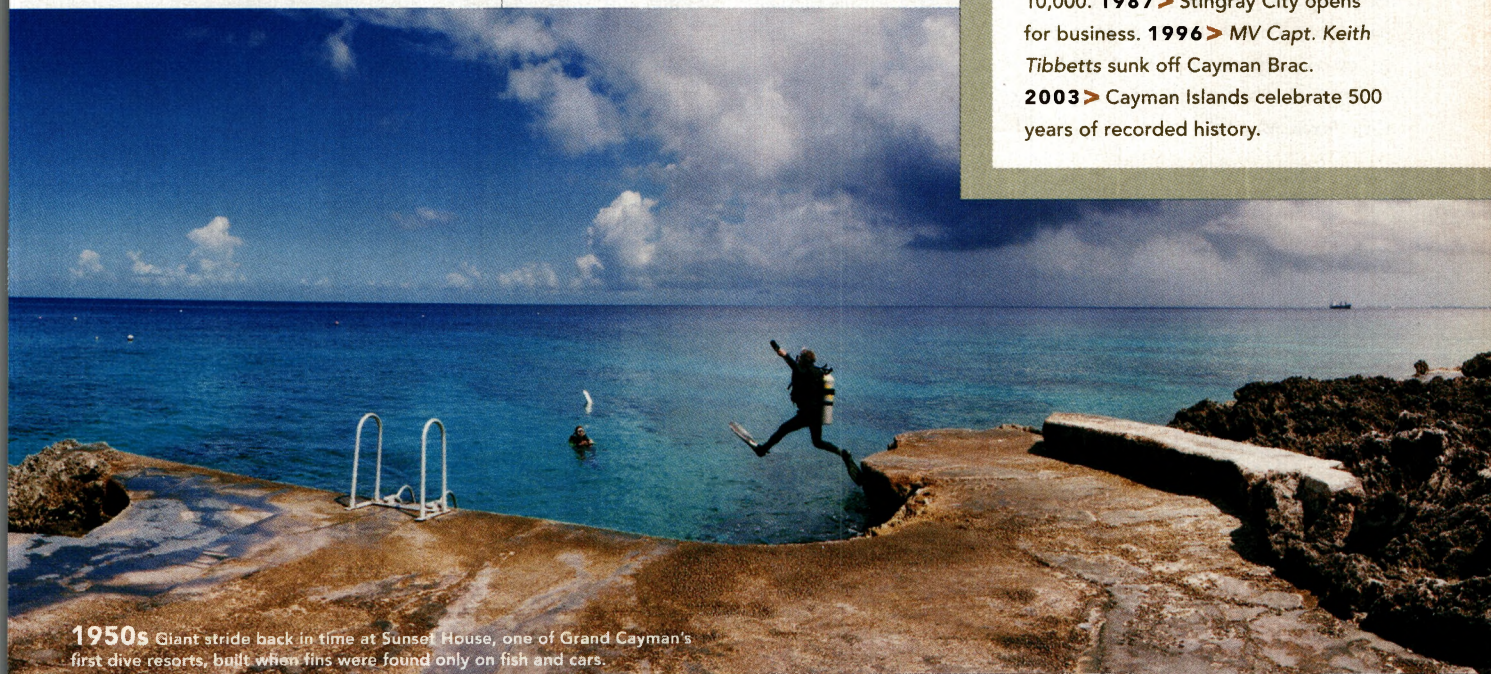
THE EASTERNMOST of the three Caymans differs in one very noticeable way—its tall, rocky spine runs the length of the island and culminates in a 140-foot sheer drop-off on its eastern tip. Roughly the same size as Little Cayman, it has more than 15 times its population—still not much. The Brac has kept its down-home, pastoral charm.

What Makes Cayman Brac Unique

GEOGRAPHY > The Brac's rugged interior affords visitors a chance to explore several caves, including one populated by bats and another that was used to shelter the island's residents during the hurricane of 1932. A 12-mile drive from the resorts will

CAYMAN ISLANDS HISTORY LESSON

1503 > Columbus names the islands "Las Tortugas" because the land and seas are thick with turtles. **1586** > Sir Francis Drake arrives with 23 vessels and spends two days on uninhabited Grand Cayman. **1655** > England captures Jamaica (which includes the Cayman Islands). **1666** > First settlers arrive on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. **1700** > First settlers arrive on Grand Cayman. **1773** > Population reaches 400. **1802** > Population reaches almost 1,000. **1835** > All slaves declared free. **1932** > 108 killed in hurricane. **1937** > With 450 passengers, the cruise ship *Atlantis* is Grand Cayman's first. **1950s** > Several hotels open, and tourism takes off. **1953** > Owen Roberts Airport and the first commercial bank, Barclays, open for business. **1957** > First dive operation opens on Grand Cayman. **1959** > Constitution adopted, no longer dependency of Jamaica. **1962** > Islands decide to remain a British Crown Colony. **1970** > Population hits 10,000. **1987** > Stingray City opens for business. **1996** > MV *Capt. Keith Tibbetts* sunk off Cayman Brac. **2003** > Cayman Islands celebrate 500 years of recorded history.



1950s Giant stride back in time at Sunset House, one of Grand Cayman's first dive resorts, built when fins were found only on fish and cars.

READER COMMENTS:

CAYMAN ISLANDS

GRAND CAYMAN

"Water temps were warm ... Lots of swim-throughs, great coral and fish life ... Night dives incredible ... Lots of sharks ... Stingray City—very much fun ... Island very clean, seems safe ... East End still relatively untouched." —A.G., *New Orleans, La., Aug. '02.* "Great variety of marine life ... Lots of color." —K.S., *Rio Rancho, N.M., Sept. '02.* "A lot of vertical canyons, swim-throughs, great visibility, wildlife ... The best diving I've ever done." —D.P., *Iowa City, Iowa, May '03.*

SISTER ISLANDS

"Beauty above and under water ... Friendly people ... Attentive service, good meals." —D.B., *Lilburn, Ga., April '03.* "Great wall diving, spectacular coral, wonderful tropical fish." —B.B., *Oakland, Calif., Aug. '02.* "Little Cayman and Cayman Brac are very low-key ... No crowds or noise ... The reefs have very little dive pressure, so they're in extremely good health." —J.C., *Tucker, Ga., May '03.* "Bloody Bay Wall was amazing ... Cayman Brac is a nice, slow-paced dive experience ... You'll get lots of personal attention." —R.S., *League City, Texas, May '03.*

take you to the Bluff, where you can look out over the Caribbean 140 feet below.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS > Can't choose between the Brac and Little Cayman? During a weeklong stay on Cayman Brac, odds are good you'll make the 45-minute crossing to Little Cayman to dive the famed sites on Bloody Bay Wall.

4 Timeless Dive Sites

ANCHOR WALL > This wall starts deep in about 70 feet of water. Wedged between a coral chimney and a mini-wall is a 10-foot anchor. The tops of the coral pinnacles are covered with sea plumes and gorgonians, and are tended by creole wrasse.

BLUFF WALL > The easternmost island's easternmost dive sites lies 140 feet below a rugged ironshore cliff. Expect the same topography below water, where a steep wall is covered with sea fans, black coral and tons of sponges. You may encounter the big stuff here, like sharks, rays and turtles.

RUSSIAN WRECK > A 330-foot Russian warship—the world's largest diveable one—was towed here from Cuba in 1996. This popular wreck is also called the 356 and *MV Capt. Keith Tibbetts*, and depths range from

90 to a very diver-friendly 35 feet.

EAST CHUTE AND THE CAYMAN MARINER > A classic Brac night dive, you'll know you've found the wreck of the *Cayman Mariner* when your flashlight is reflected in the wide eyes of the resident squirrelfish at 50 feet. Off the *Mariner's* bow, East Chute Reef is brimming with barrel and vase sponges occupied by slinky brittle stars.

Little Cayman

WITH A POPULATION of 100, Little Cayman is a half-hour flight and a world away from Grand Cayman. One of a handful of small resorts will be your home for a week, and the Caribbean's most dramatic drop-off, Bloody Bay Wall, is your backyard. If you can't relax on Little Cayman, it's time to step up your medication.

What Makes Little Cayman Unique

BLOODY BAY WALL > Perhaps the best known wall in this mecca of wall diving is at Bloody Bay and Jackson Bight. Made up of a series of dive sites, the double crescents are the definition of wall diving. The almost per-

MACDUFF EVERTON



In the Cayman Islands, cozy old-school diver hotels and opulent modern resorts—like the Hyatt Regency Grand Cayman—co-exist peacefully.



The sites of Bloody Bay Wall are picture-perfect wall dives, starting in less than 20 feet of water and plummeting into the Caribbean's abyssal depths.

fectly vertical wall starts in about 18 feet of water and drops thousands of feet.

PEACE AND QUIET > If you can't relax here, you just can't relax.

4 Timeless Dive Sites

MIXING BOWL > More divers come to this confluence of currents between Bloody Bay and Jackson Bight than perhaps any other site on Little Cayman. And for good reason. A table-edge drop-off slopes to a sand flat with a mini-wall riddled with sand chutes, chimneys and tunnels.

SOTO TRADER > This is Little Cayman's premier night dive. The cargo holds are penetrable through the top of the wreck, and you can point your light into portholes to find supermale parrotfish stuffed inside. Explore the reef just off the bow to find noc-

turnal squid, lobster and squirrellfish.

BLACK HOLE > One of Little Cayman's best southern dives, Black Hole is a great alternative when the boats aren't going to Bloody Bay. A giant crevice in the gradually tumbling drop-off leads to the wall base. Mountainous star coral, gorgonians and plate coral give this site an otherworldly feel.

GREAT WALL > Starting in just 18 feet of water, the wall here drops into the inky blue abyss. You'll see grouper, spotted eagle rays and the occasional blacktip shark. Not all the fun is deep—macro photographers will enjoy the wall top and its basket stars, sponges and other invertebrates. **SD**

GET THERE

> For more information on the Cayman Islands, turn to In Depth, page 107, section 2.

CAYMAN DIVE SKILL: WALL DIVING

Wall diving will bring you closer to flying than any other activity that doesn't require parachutes or wings. Best of all, it's cheap, easy and safe; just giant stride in and descend to the shallow portion of the wall. Determine the direction of the current, and start your dive swimming into it along the wall. Go deep first, then work your way back up the wall as your dive progresses. Always monitor your gauges, as it's easy to go far deeper than you planned. When you or your buddy suck half your tank dry, turn around and follow the same course back to the boat. Spend your remaining bottom time exploring the shallows near the boat, and remember to make a safety stop at 15 feet for three to five minutes.

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10

Things

TO DO IN (CHICAGO)

1 DIVE INTO A BIG MACK. There are hundreds of wrecks in Lake Michigan, but the one that has Chicago divers bubbling with excitement is the 200-foot Great Lakes steamship *Straits of Mackinac*. Intentionally sunk 10 miles northeast of the Navy Pier, the retired car ferry is affectionately called "The Mack." Lying upright and intact in 80 feet of water, it offers both open-water and penetration opportunities.

2 GO OLD SCHOOL. Like wrecks with a little age? Catch a charter to the 73-foot-long *Tacoma*, a wooden-hulled tug that sank in 1932. Other favorites include the 240-foot steel-hulled *Material Service Barge* and the three-masted schooner *Wells Burt*.

3 LAUGH AT THE COLD. Surface temps in August reach the low

70Fs. Beneath the thermocline, however, it can be a bracing 50F. Take a dry suit specialty course and laugh at the cold.

4 GO MUCKRAKING. Rachel Carson Scuba Park, named for the environmental journalist, is a great "muck dive." Look for rock bass and freshwater salamanders among old telephone poles and concrete barricades.

5 SING THE BLUES. Grant Park turns into a giant juke joint during the annual Chicago Blues Festival (June 10-13, 2004). Each year, blues legends from around the world perform on six stages. And this ain't no jive—it's all free.

6 SEE THE BIG PICTURE. Check out the IMAX film *Coral Reef Adventure* inside the five-story-tall Omnimax dome at the Museum of Science and Industry (until Oct. 9, 2003).

7 PLAY BALL. Hit Wrigley Field to see if the Chicago Cubs can break the streak and play in the Fall Classic—and win for the first time since 1908.



8 BITE A DOG. Portillo's serves mouth-watering hot dogs in traditional Chicago style: yellow mustard, onions, relish, tomato, pickle, peppers and cucumber on a poppy-seed bun.

9 DIVE DRY. Modeled on the reefs of Apo Island in the Philippines, the Shedd Aquarium's Wild Reef exhibit features 30 sharks and other predators in a 400,000-gallon display.

10 TAKE IN A SHOW. Go to Our World-Underwater, one of the largest consumer dive expos in the country, April 23-25, 2004. **SD**

GET THERE > For more information on Chicago, turn to In Depth, page 110, section 4.



The view from Marlin Bay Resort, Fiji, as the sun sets over Beqa Lagoon.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN FRINK



The Best of the Pacific

From Maui to Micronesia, the scoop on operators and resorts.

GIANT CLAMS, MANTA RAYS, REEF SHARKS—just a few reasons to dive the world's most bio-diverse ocean—the Pacific. As a diver, at some point you're going to board a plane and head out from the West Coast in search of the planet's best diving. Use this primer to guide you in picking the top-rated operator and resort, whether your chosen destination happens to be Hawaii, Fiji, Palau or Yap.

DIVE OPERATORS

KAUAI, HAWAII

Seasport Divers

TEL: (800) 685-5889, (808) 742-9303

WEB: www.seasportdivers.com

90.9 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: F.F., Palos Verdes Estates, Calif.: "Great shop, personalized service, nice staff." April '03. R.N., Farmington, Utah: "Friendly, knowledgeable staff. Great boats." April '03. C.D., La Mesa, Calif.: "I saw tons of sea turtles on both dives!" April '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A**. Staff **A+**.

Boats & Facilities **A-**. Value **A-**.

MAUI, HAWAII

Ed Robinson's Diving Adventures

TEL: (800) 635-1273, (808) 879-3584

WEB: www.maui-scuba.com

93.1 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: J.K., Fortson, Ga.: "The divemasters briefed us on what we could expect and they let us dive our own profiles. They were continuously pointing out things on the dive and explaining what we had seen after the dive if we were unfamiliar with it." April '03. J.M., Brooklyn, N.Y.: "Going from the check-in, site selection, briefing, safety, servings of pineapple to the knowledge and helpfulness of the staff: This is how all dive operators should work!" April '03.

D I V E
D E A L S

CAYMAN BRAC

Divi Tiara "777" Special

1 THE DEAL: The Divi Tiara Beach Resort on Cayman Brac is offering a 777 diver's special, which includes 7 nights' accommodations, 7 full breakfasts and 7 dinners, as well as 6 days of two-tank morning boat dives, unlimited

shore diving, one trip to Little Cayman to dive Bloody Bay Wall (weather permitting), hotel taxes, service charges and round-trip airport/hotel transfers for \$777 per person, double occupancy. This offer is valid through Dec. 14. (Waterhouse Tours, 800-272-9122, 305-451-2228, www.waterhouse-tours.com)

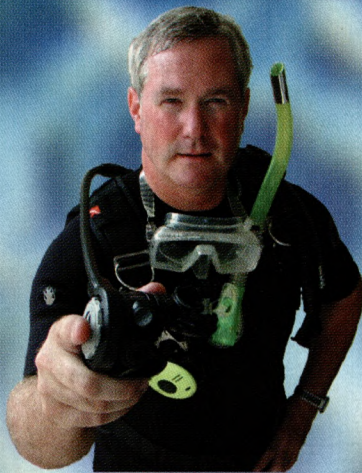
COZUMEL

Iberostar's Fall Fiesta

2 THE DEAL: Iberostar Cozumel has special rates Nov. 1-16. For \$1,149 p.p., dbl. occ., which includes 7 nights, 5 two-tank boat dives, round-trip airfare from Houston (midweek), scheduled and special activities,

(continued on p. 44)

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READER RATINGS

(SCORES)

Overall **A-**. Staff **A**.

Boats & Facilities **A**. Value **C+**.

MAUI, HAWAII

Scuba Shack

TEL: (877) 213-4488, (808) 891-0500

WEB: www.scubashack.com

87.5 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: *K.M., Pacific, Wash.:*

"This is an excellent group to dive with, one of the best yet that I've found. They had a very nice boat, nice warm showers after dives to rinse off and a knowledgeable staff." March '03. *C.R., Brooklyn, N.Y.:* "I got my certification with the Scuba Shack in March, and I can't wait to go back. I heard whale songs on every dive." March '03. *D.S., Keller, Texas:* "My divemaster was amazing at finding rare critters. His before and after briefings on rare critters were great. You knew what you were finding and seeing ... The captain was an excellent tour guide and the divemasters were helpful and fun to dive with." April '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A+**. Staff **A+**.

Boats & Facilities **A+**. Value **A**.

OAHU, HAWAII

Reef Trekkers, Oahu

TEL: (877) 359-7333, (808) 943-0588

WEB: www.reeftrekkers.com,

www.divetravelhawaii.com

85.2 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: *K.D., Rockville, Md.:*

"I'm recommending them to friends. I was a bit confused about them not having a shop, but I realized this only helped make them one of the best operators on the island because of their mobility. They provided everything and more than they promised." Feb. '03. *D.P., New York, N.Y.:* "Instructors are very good and happy to help out when asked ... We were on a big catamaran, which helped with the chop." April '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A-**. Staff **A**.

Boats & Facilities **B**. Value **B+**.

BIG ISLAND, HAWAII

Jack's Diving Locker

TEL: (800) 345-4807, (808) 329-7585

WEB: www.jacksdivinglocker.com

DIVE DEALS

nonmotorized watersports, all meals and beverages (including alcoholic drinks), taxes and service charges. A group special is also offered—when 8 pay, the 9th is free. (Caradonna Caribbean Tours, 800-328-2288, www.caradonna.com)

NASSAU, BAHAMAS

The Great Bahamas Shark Shootout

3 THE DEAL: The Great Bahamas Shark Shootout is a weeklong photo event held at Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas and hosted by Stephen Frink. You can join the "Stuart's Sampler" weekend option or the full week, including the "Shark Immersion" add-on. The weekend option runs Nov. 7-11, includes 3 days of two-tank dives with Stuart and Stephen, a Shark

(continued on p. 46)

97.4 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: S.B., Ada, Mich.: "We were treated like royalty and gained information on every dive. The entire outfit was very professional. We will dive with them again and again." March '03. B.K., Newhall, Calif.: "We took a specialty dive course while vacationing. Our instructor was very thorough, knowledgeable and patient ... The whole staff knew our names and they treated our gear like their own ... I highly recommend this fun, fantastic facility for a class or just a great dive. We will be back." April '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A+**. Staff **A+**.

Boats & Facilities **A+**. Value **A**.

FIJI

Marlin Bay Resort

TEL: (800) 542-3454, (949) 646-8091

WEB: www.marlinbay.com

81 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: C.T., Memphis, Tenn.: "They had snacks in between dives and they would cater the dives to your needs. We were tired after a rough current dive and asked the crew if we could make a shallow dive in a secluded lagoon that had no current. They gladly obliged and managed to keep track of all of us. Very professional." Dec. '02. C.O., Tustin, Calif.: "Diving here was a breeze. When you arrive, you load equipment into a mesh bag they provide and place it on the porch of your bure. From then on, you take care of your equipment and they take care of everything else." Nov. '02.

(SCORES)

Overall **A-**. Staff **A-**.

Boat & Facilities **A**. Value **A-**.

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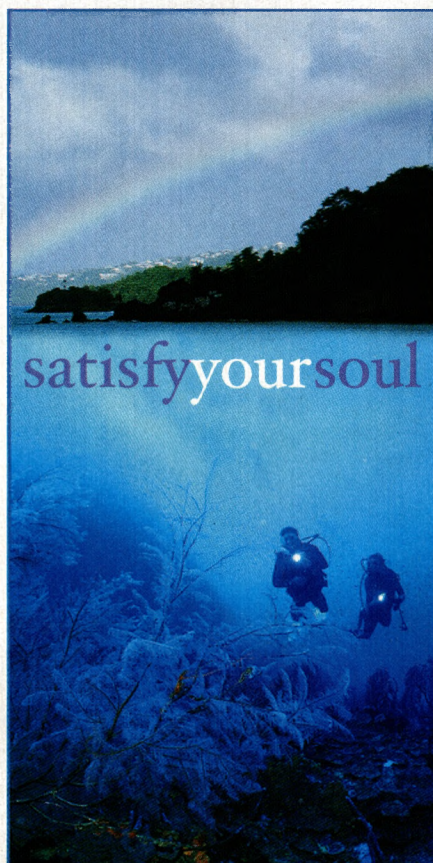
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email: svgtourismeurope@aol.com

USA: Tel: 1 800 729-1726

email: svgtony@aol.com

CANADA: Tel (416) 398-4277

www.svgtourism.com

READER RATINGS

PALAU, MICRONESIA

Sam's Tours

TEL: (011) 680-488-1062

WEB: www.samstours.com

85 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: J.H., Melbourne, Vt.: "I liked their attention to detail, constant concern for safety and the accommodating staff. I have never experienced such tailored, personalized service before. The entire staff, from operations to ownership, went overboard in making everyone's stay an excellent one." April '03. A.B., Duisburg, Germany: "They had a nice base to contact other divers, very good service, equipment, information, food, transfers and an underwater photography center and so on. I liked the big shop with everything you need." March '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A**. Staff **A+**.

Boats & Facilities **A**. Value **A-**.

YAP, MICRONESIA

Yap Divers

TEL: (800) 348-3927, (011) 691-350-2300

WEB: www.mantaray.com

76.9 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would dive with this operator again.

READERS SAY: J.B., Greenwich, Conn.: "Staff were delightful and safety-conscious. The boat driver could navigate the waters with his eyes closed. The boat was clean and they offered hot tea, fresh water and warm bread." March '03. S.F., Chicago, Ill.: "I liked the knowledgeable and friendly staff." March '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A**. Staff **A**.

Boats & Facilities **A**. Value **A**.

ACCOMMODATIONS

FIJI

Garden Island Resort

TEL: (800) 541-4334, (415) 398-8990

WEB: www.aquatrek.com

93.8 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would stay at this resort again.

READERS SAY: N.J., Grosse Pointe, Mich.: "If you want American-style food, stay at home. The food pre-

DIVE DEALS

Adventure trip and shark awareness specialty course, and starts at \$700 p.p., dbl. occ. in garden-view room. The "Shark Immersion" add-on includes private shark charters for three additional dive days and personalized photo coaching and instruction from Stephen. The entire week including the "Shark Immersion" starts at \$1,320 p.p., dbl. occ. in garden-view room. (800-879-9832, 954-524-5755, www.sharkshootout.com)

GRAND CAYMAN

Fisheye & Sunshine Suites

4 THE DEAL: Dive Grand Cayman's walls of fame for just \$755 p.p., dbl.

occ., including airfare from Miami on Cayman

(continued on p. 48)

pared here was marvelous. You are your own entertainment. World travelers come here from all walks of life and, for the most part, are very entertaining if not educational." Nov. '02. R.S., Rio Rancho, N.M.: "The staff is one of the friendliest I have ever encountered in all my travels." Dec. '02.

(SCORES)

Overall **A**. Service **A+**.

Accommodations **A-**.

Restaurant **A+**. Value **A**.

YAP, MICRONESIA

Manta Ray Bay Hotel

TEL: (800) 348-3927, (011) 691-350-2300

WEB: www.mantaray.com

82.4 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would stay at this resort again.

READERS SAY: J.K., Vacaville, Calif.:

"There was nothing to dislike. It is a family-run business and they cater to all of your needs." Feb. '03. J.E., FPO, AP: "This resort provides a great dive package in combination with Yap Divers. It's a great environment for diving and relaxing. The owner is refurbishing a huge antique junk sailboat that has a bar, restaurant, and deck chairs for lying out in the sun." June '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **A**. Service **A+**.

Accommodations **A**.

Restaurant **A**. Value **A**.

FIJI

Marlin Bay Resort

TEL: (800) 542-3454, (949) 646-8091

WEB: www.marlinbay.com

84.6 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would stay at this resort again.

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\$2899

Yap

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8 days at the Manta Ray Bay Hotel, 17 dives.
Valid July 1-August 31, 2003

8 days/ 7 nights from:
\$2499

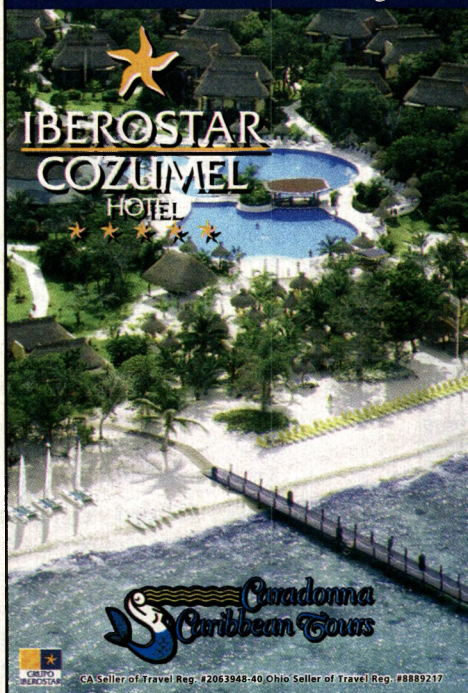
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port/hotel transfers unless otherwise indicated; airfare from Yap is midweek rounding). Rates and taxes are subject to change without notice. AVAILABILITY IS LIMITED. Rates
do not include U.S. Arrival/Departure Taxes, International Airport Departure Tax, Immigration, Customs User Fee, Federal Inspection Fees and APHS Fees and/or Inspection
Fees of up to \$160 (*Palau and Yap do not include: meals on land, drinks, personal expenses, or air taxes of approximately \$160 and Palau dive permit of \$35). Individual country
departure tax not exceeding \$25 (USD) per person requires direct payment by passenger. Blackout dates, holiday surcharges and other restrictions may apply. Gratuities not
included. Tours operated by Caradonna Caribbean Tours (CST# 2063948-40, OST# 8889217) and Trip-N-Tour Pacific (CST# 2025043-40, OST# 8889209)

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Join us for a true diver's delight. 5 days of diving including 5 2-tank guided boat dives. This All-Inclusive package includes 7 night accommodations, roundtrip airfare from Houston Midweek, all scheduled and special activities, non-motorized water sports, all meals and beverages (including alcoholic), plus hotel taxes and service charges.
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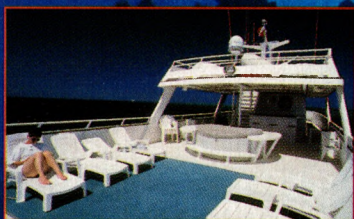
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With miles of coral-clustered walls and thriving marine life like tarpon, turtles and eagle rays, Belize is truly a diver's paradise. Experience Belize's offshore atolls to the fullest in comfort during a relaxing week aboard the yacht *Belize Aggressor III*.



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READER RATINGS

READERS SAY: *J.T., San Diego, Calif.:* "Spacious room, excellent food and beautiful grounds as well. We had an ocean view and were able to watch the sunset. The only thing we didn't like was the awkwardness of diving, such as unloading and loading gear each time we went on the boat. There is no dock, and passengers are taken to the dive boats in a skiff." April '03. *A.K., Newport Coast, Calif.:* "Friendly staff, excellent food and beautiful accommodations." April '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **B+**. Service **A-**.
Accommodations **B**.
Restaurant **A-**. Value **A-**.

our jobs and stay there to be beach bums." Feb. '03. *C.O., Potomac, Md.:* "It was too expensive for what you received, especially if you are diving a lot." Feb. '03. *G.M., Arnold, Md.:* "While I would stay here again, I was disappointed in a supposed 5-star resort." June '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **B+**. Service **A-**.
Accommodations **A-**.
Restaurant **B-**. Value **C**.

BIG ISLAND, HAWAII

Royal Kona Resort

TEL: (808) 329-3111

WEB: www.royalkona.com

57.7 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would stay at this resort again.

READERS SAY: *M.Z., Chesterton, Ind.:* "I liked the size of the room, the luau and the resort's location." Feb. '03. *D.H., Riverside, Calif.:* "The resort was very close, within walking distance, to our Kona dive operations and shore facilities ... Beautiful oceanfront, open-air dining and lounge facilities. The pool area is nice ... Rooms are a bit worn, but it's still an excellent oceanfront location ... The north building and center building get too much noise from the restaurant and nightclub music next

PALAU, MICRONESIA

Palau Pacific Resort

TEL: (011) 680-488-2600

WEB: www.panpacific.com

84.2 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would stay at this resort again.

READERS SAY: *J.C., Gladstone, Ore.:* "The room was wonderful, the staff hard to beat. We adored being there ... The food was great. We felt pampered and well 'vacationed' when we left—after we decided we couldn't quit

DIVE DEALS

Airways, 3 dive days with Fisheye, 5 nights at Sunshine Suites and a rental car. (Caribbean Adventures/World Dive Adventures, 800-433-3483, 954-236-6611, www.worlddive.com)

ROATAN, HONDURAS

Fantasy Island Air/Land Fall Special

5 THE DEAL: Get a special fall package for \$999 p.p., dbl. occ., including round-trip airfare from Dallas, airport transfers, 7 nights' accommodations, 3 meals a day, free use of kayaks, unlimited shore diving, 1 night boat dive and a welcome cocktail. The rate is good Sept. 13 through Dec. 19 (Nov. 22-29 excluded). (800-676-2826 or 985-726-9188, www.fantasyislandresort.com)

door." May '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **C**. Service **C-**.

Accommodations **C**.

Restaurant **C-**. Value **C+**.

PALAU, MICRONESIA

West Plaza Hotels

TEL: (011) 680-488-2133

WEB: www.wphpalau.com

92 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS said they would stay at this resort again.

READERS SAY: *R.P., Santa Rita, Guam:*

"Inexpensive and clean. We went to Palau to dive, not to stay in the room. The staff was great, and the hotel was quiet. The rooms were clean and kept clean during our stay. Next time in Palau, I'll stay at the same place." April '03. *M.D., Honolulu, Hawaii:* "The hotel was located in town so you didn't need to worry about transportation. The staff was friendly and the rooms were basic but clean. It's perfect for divers who are there to dive. I wouldn't recommend this place to anyone seeking resort comfort." March '03.

(SCORES)

Overall **B**. Service **A+**.

Accommodations **B-**.

Restaurant **C-**. Value **B**.



Note: Scores are based on a response of more than 6,000 surveys. Overall scores for operators and resorts are derived by averaging their individual scores based on staff, boats, facilities and value. To ensure statistical validity, only those operators and resorts that were rated by 25 or more readers are included here. Changes or improvements may have been made since information was gathered and may not be reflected in the scores.

CAYMAN

8 days, 7 nights • 6 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore dives • bkfst. & dinner daily. 5/1-12/14/03

\$777 pp
dbl
occ

Divi Tiara Beach Resort

The intimate Divi Tiara Beach Resort is world renowned for it's unlimited diving options! Dive Bloody Wall Bay, or a Russian Destroyer, and the largest underwater mountain range in the western hemisphere! A comfortable and relaxed resort with great restaurants and nightlife. Rejuvenate, dive, feast, relax- Tiara style....

8 days, 7 nights • 6 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore dives • 3 meals daily • R/T trans. • gratuities. 5/1-12/15/03

\$1169 pp
dbl
occ

Little Cayman Beach Resort

Little Cayman's Beach Resort's service and room amenities are outstanding. Home to Reef Divers and known as having the Best Wall Diving, Fish Life, Visibility, Healthiest Marine Environment, Dive Operation Resort, Destination...that's a lot of Bests.

8 days, 7 nights • 6 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore dives. 4/16-12/13/03

\$728 pp
dbl
occ

Seaview Hotel & Dive Resort

The Seaview Hotel and Dive center is the oldest hotel and restaurant on Grand Cayman. A short walk to Georgetown. Located ocean front in beautiful south sound, with breath taking sunsets, and incredible diving less than 100 yards offshore. The Seaview Dive Center is the on site full service dive center featuring a brand new 30 foot dive boat.

8 days, 7 nights • 6 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore dives • bkfst. daily • R/T transfer. 4/27-12/15/03

\$1120 pp
dbl
occ

Sunset House

A "Diver's Dream" catering to today's diver, Grand Cayman's Hotel for Divers by Divers, located 1 mile south of George Town. Experience all-day 3-tank and half day 2-tank trips, rebreathers, deep walls, nitrox to mixed gasses, shore dive day or night. Everything you need: Sunset Divers, "My Bar" and Cathy Church's Underwater Photo Centre.

*Cayman Islands Department of Tourism
and Cayman Airways*

CAYMAN ISLANDS
Grand Cayman • Cayman Brac • Little Cayman



Caradonna Caribbean Tours Inc.
Customized Scuba Dive Travel

435 Douglas Ave., Ste. 2205, Altamonte Spgs., FL 32714 • 407/774-9000 • Fax 407/682-6000

See our website for more info on above: www.caradonna.com • E-mail: sales@caradonna.com

USA & Canada: 800/328-2288

COZUMEL

8 days, 7 nights • 5 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore diving • 3 meals daily • R/T transfer. 7/1-12/22/03

\$913 pp
dbl
occ

Scuba Club Cozumel

A small intimate dedicated divers resort located 1 mile south of downtown Cozumel. Offering quality and value with our room, meal and diving packages that make your vacation easy to plan. Offering an on-site 5 star international dive center to cater to all your diving needs, great boats and excellent beach diving. We have everything you need all in one convenient location!

8 days, 7 nights • 6 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore diving • bkfst. daily • \$100 food & beverage credit • R/T transfer. 7/1-12/20/03

\$1042 pp
dbl
occ

Presidente InterContinental

Surrounded by sapphire waters and lush vegetation, the only five star AAA four Diamond resort on the Island with a mile of white sand beach, just perfect for the well traveled diver. The Elite Gold Palm dive operator, SCUBA DU has been offering personal, quality service for over 12 years. Experience Cozumel like you never have before!

8 days, 7 nights • 6 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore diving • all inclusive plus 7th night free • R/T transfer. 7/1-12/22/03

\$803 pp
dbl
occ

Reef Club Beach Resort

Reef Club the most exciting all inclusive hotel in Cozumel, surrounded by white beaches and turquoise waters. The perfect location for divers, only minutes by boat from our private pier to the best dive sites in Cozumel. Sand Dollar Sports, our on site full service dive shop dedicated to providing first class diving experiences, your best choice!

8 days, 7 nights • 5 days, 2 tank boat & unlim. shore diving • bkfst. daily • R/T transfer. 7/1-12/20/03

\$540 pp
dbl
occ

El Cid La Ceiba

No Island in the Caribbean offers more than Cozumel, and no hotel in Cozumel offers more than El Cid La Ceiba. You'll find gracious hospitality, great dining and comfortable accommodations. Snorkel, play tennis, sip a margarita on the beach or just relax in our ocean-side hot tub. Dive with on site operator Aqua World Cozumel.



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USA & Canada: 800/328-2288

LIGHT SPEED

*Full-foot fins weigh
less and move faster.
We kicked 12 models
and found five top
performers.*

IN LAST MONTH'S ISSUE, we told you how we took a dozen volunteer divers with us to test 30 models of fins on the current-washed reefs of Cozumel, Mexico. We kicked 116 pairs on speed courses and slalom courses and in real-world diving scenarios. Of the 30 models we tested, 12 were of the full-foot variety. As we said in last month's review, adjustable fins are fast, powerful and maneuverable, but they can't quite match the efficiency of full-foot fins.

by John Brumm



Mares Plana Avanti Tre This is one kick-ass fin. Fastest on the speed course, second fastest on the slalom course, one of only three fins rated "very good" in maneuverability, and a top performer in real-world diving.

Made of thermoplastic rubber and Tecralene, the Tre's blade is designed with a three-channel "avanti" system, hence the name. The center channel curves upward while the two side channels curve downward. Two stabilizers on the ends help to eliminate slide-slipping. This allows the fin to both torpedo you forward when running down an eagle ray, and provide efficient power in tight turns. This fin's very comfortable foot pocket is a bonus.

TESTER COMMENTS: "Nice overall feel ... comfortable ... turns easy ... good performing fin ... gets the job done." —*John Wheeler* "Even though fit wasn't perfect, it offered very good performance." —*Vallorie Hodges* "Great control ... great in the turns ... feels powerful." —*Cathy Hamilton* "Great fin ... stable and comfortable." —*Chris Parsons*



MARES
Plana Avanti Tre



OCEANIC
Caribe

Oceanic Caribe The Oceanic Caribe is the undisputed go-fast fin on the slalom course and one of only three fins to earn a "very good" rating for maneuverability. On the speed course, it's a rocket. Lightweight and nimble, this is a great open-water fin and an even better reef fin.

Incorporating a paddle blade with a pliable center panel flanked by polymer ribs, the Caribe puts out a lot of power for little effort. The fin is comfortable, effortless and propels you through the water like a rocket. It offers excellent acceleration and great cornering. Simply awesome.

TESTER COMMENTS: "I really like this fin." —*Heather Carvey* "A joy to wear ... feels like you don't have fins on." —*John Wheeler* "The perfect fin for everyday Caribbean diving." —*Jeff Lovin* "Best in show." —*Scott Wertman* "Lovely, lovely, lovely." —*Polly Shaw* "These fins are poetry in motion." —*Cathy Hamilton*

Behind the Tests

Here's a case for wearing full-foots on your next tropical dive vacation:

- Full-foots are lighter—in some cases, as little as half the weight of adjustables (especially adjustable splits with thick side rails).
- Full-foots are more compact and easier to pack.
- Full-foots don't have dangling straps and are therefore more streamlined.
- Full-foots grip your entire foot more firmly, providing a more efficient transfer of energy from foot to fin blade.
- Full-foots don't require booties.
- Full-foots are cheaper—often costing half to a third of what you'd pay for adjustables.

Of course, there are some disadvantages to wearing full-foots. If they fit properly (as snug as possible without having them jam or squeeze your toes and cut off circulation),

they can be slightly more difficult to put on and take off, especially in the water. Because you don't wear booties with full-foot fins, you'll be barefoot when you climb boat ladders and walk on decks, which can be uncomfortable. In cold water and when diving from rocky terrain, full-foot fins simply aren't an option.

When all is said and done, full-foots—thanks to their convenience, performance and price—are the way to go for tropical divers. One tester claimed that wearing full-foot fins is like having "lightweight wings" on your feet. On your next tropical dive vacation, take a look at what divemasters are wearing. You'll likely notice that most wear full-foots. Buy a pair for local summertime diving or snorkeling or for your annual tropical vacations. Heck, buy two pairs—they're inexpensive.

Full-foots in a Nutshell

Here's an interesting finding from our fin testing—while splits tend to show a slight advantage among adjustable fins, paddles have the advantage among full-foots. Four of the fastest full-foots using a flutter kick are paddles, and three of the five fastest full-foots using the frog kick are paddles. In slalom runs, four of the five fastest full-foots are paddles, three of which earned "very good" nods for maneuverability. In ergonomic tests, three of the five top scores are paddles.

Best of Both Worlds?

On average, full-foot fins deliver more speed than adjustables and probably cost you less energy, but the downside comes



AERIS
Velocity

Aeris Velocity While not the fastest on the straightaways or the fleetest on the slalom course, the Velocity leads the pack in real-world diving performance. This small and lightweight fin seems to offer everything, from above-average blue-water kicking power to excellent stability to an effective nonskid sole. It is even easy to put on and take off.

The fin is designed with "power-enhancing vents," a series of holes in a flexible panel that runs down the center of the blade. During the fin stroke, water flow is directed through these holes, which helps to reduce stress on legs while accelerating water over the blade. This results in a fin that requires so little effort it sometimes doesn't seem like it's doing much, but in fact it's moving you right along.

TESTER COMMENTS: "The Venus Williams of full-foot fins." —Polly Shaw "Very fast, nice fit ... two thumbs up." —Erin Rechisky "Speed and power with little stress ... a great fin." —Jeff Lovin "Great control, great speed." —Cathy Hamilton

when you walk barefoot on docks and decks and climb boat ladders. Can you somehow have the best of both types? Is it possible to wear booties inside full-foots without losing their advantages?

We tried an experiment. Two testers wore booties inside two models of full-foots and made several speed runs. They had to use slightly larger sizes to accommodate the booties, but the fins seemed to be otherwise identical to the smaller sizes they had worn without booties earlier. In particular, the blade sizes looked the same.

The result? The speeds were virtually the same with booties and without, for both testers and both pairs of fins. Wearing booties inside the fins seemed to make no difference.

This suggests that eliminating the mushy booties is not the real reason for the

full-foot advantage. Their light weight and the fact that they cup the heel are probably more important.

It also suggests that you could have the best of both types by sizing your full-foots to fit over a pair of booties. Use thin booties with minimal soles and high ankles so it's easier to remove the fin and leave the bootie in place.

We think the bootie-in-the-full-foot trick might be worth trying. If you try it, let us know what you think. —**JOHN FRANCIS**

Full-Foot Fins At a Glance

Fastest: **Mares Plana Avanti Tre**

Slowest: **Dacor DXD**

Fleetest on the Slalom Course: **Oceanic Caribe**, closely followed by the **Mares**

Plana Avanti Tre and Scubapro Twin Jet (Black)

Clunkiest on the Slalom Course: **Dacor DXD**

Best Overall: **Tie between the Mares**

Plana Avanti Tre and Oceanic Caribe

Worst Overall: **Sporasub Variant Master**

Missing in Action

More than 25 manufacturers were invited to participate in our fin testing. H2Odyssey's new Mach II Turbo was tied up in patent litigation, so we couldn't get a pair to test. International Divers and Tilos were willing and able, but logistical difficulties prevented them from being included in the round-up. Action Plus, Beuchat, Cressi-sub, Dive Rite, IST Sports, Omersub and Parkway were invited, but either chose not to participate or didn't respond.



OCEANIC
Vortex V6

Oceanic Vortex V6 Made of a space age polymer called Evap-arene, the V6 is lighter than most splits and has a stiffer-than-average feel, similar to a paddle fin. Many split fin fans prefer this combination of light weight and stiffness over the heavier, more rubbery blades found on most splits.

The V6 does just about everything well. It's the fastest split fin in this test group, and ranks among the fastest of full-foots when using the flutter kick. It's very easy to control while exploring wrecks or reefs. The only place the V6 slips up—literally—is its nonskid sole, which could use some more bite for walking wet boat decks.

TESTER COMMENTS: "Easy to control in tight places." —*Vicki Durst* "Excellent all-around performer." —*Scott Wertman* "Good little fin." —*Chris Caka* "Outstanding control." —*Cathy Hamilton* "Another fast fin." —*Polly Shaw* "Quick with both dolphin and frog kicks." —*Heather Carvey*



Behind the Tests

Putting Faces with the Fins

MEET A FEW MORE members of our intrepid Cozumel fin test team:

POLLY SHAW

Age: 35. **Occupation:** Philanthropy program officer. **Hometown:** San Francisco, Calif. **Years diving:** 5. **Favorite full-foot fin:** A tie between the Aeris

Velocity, the Mares Plana Avanti Tre and the Oceanic Caribe.

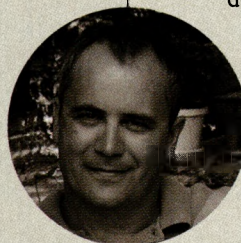
Polly Shaw spends her topside time working on energy efficiency and clean energy issues at a private philanthropy, projects



that have her jetting off to places like the People's Republic of China where a post-graduate degree in Chinese law and Mandarin keep her ahead of the curve. When not working, Polly can be found jogging over the Golden Gate Bridge, bicycling Beijing alleyways and salsa dancing in Spain. Her favorite dive site of all time is a toss-up between the life-altering experience of her first ocean dive off Looe Key, Fla., and a dive on a sunken Russian missile launcher in the Caribbean.

CHRIS PARSONS

Age: 41. **Occupation:** Software developer. **Hometown:** Austin, Texas. **Years diving:** 3. **Favorite full-foot fin:** Oceanic Caribe.



As his nicknames suggest, Chris—or ChrisP, CP or Chrispy—can have fun just about anywhere, as long as he's under water. Doesn't matter if it's diving crystal-clear Cozumel or muddy Lake Travis, Chris will be there, strapped to his trusty back plate. Holding a degree in physics, Chris is NAUI Rescue and nitrox-certified as well as a PSDI divemaster. He's also certified as a Scientific Diver (SSI) at the Aquarena Center in central Texas, the site of several important archeological digs and home to six endangered species. His best piece of dive-related advice? "For new divers," he says, "dive locally if at all possible. Don't get rusty—don't let too much time pass between dives."



SCUBAPRO
Twin Jet (Black)

Scubapro Twin Jet (Black)

"Maneuverability" is this fin's middle name.

The Twin Jet is quick in the corners and logs one of the fastest times on the slalom course. It runs mid-pack when using the flutter kick on the speed course, and is stable with good acceleration when chasing photo subjects and cruising over reefs. It's also extremely efficient weaving in and out of nooks and crannies.

The Twin Jet's flexible rubber construction (monprene) makes it comfortable. The black model is molded from a slightly stiffer compound than the lighter and more pliable cobalt and high-vis yellow models.

TESTER COMMENTS: "An extremely comfortable fin designed for the discriminating diver." —*Donald Victorian* "A great performing fin ... very maneuverable." —*John Brumm* "A lot of fun ... a great fin." —*Polly Shaw*

GET MORE



For complete details on all 12 full-foot fins tested, turn to In Depth, page 108, section 3.

DONALD VICTORIAN

Age: 56. **Occupation:** Petroleum chemist.
Hometown: Kenner, La. **Years diving:** 15.
Favorite full-foot fin: Oceanic Caribe.

When it comes to diving, PADI divemaster Donald is a busy man. With more than 500 documented dives under his weight belt, he's a volunteer diver at the Audubon Institute's Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans. He's also active in the New Orleans Bon



Temp Divers dive club, and the National Association of Black Scuba Divers. He has participated in REEF field surveys at Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. His favorite local dives

are any of the wreck dives off Pensacola, Fla. His favorite dive of all time? Punta Sur, Cozumel. When he's not diving, Donald logs 40 to 60 miles a week on local running trails.

CATHY HAMILTON

Age: 42. **Occupation:** Scuba instructor.
Hometown: Killeen, Texas. **Years diving:** 18. **Favorite full-foot fin:** Oceanic Caribe.

Cathy's the all-American woman. Wife and mother, weight lifter, kickboxer and scuba instructor. Oh yeah, her husband Brian is a lieutenant colonel with the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division. When Cathy's not taking care of the home front, she's participating in underwater cleanups at dive sites throughout the South. She's dived in a variety of locations, but her all-

time favorite underwater experience was at Columbia Deep, Cozumel, "diving with my fin test buddies." Cathy



was amazed to learn during the tests the difference a fin can make in the comfort level of a dive. Her best piece of dive-related advice? "Buy equipment that fits you, and only dive when you are comfortable with the conditions."

Many Thanks...

...to the Brisas Cozumel Resort for assistance with hotel accommodations, Dive Paradise for tanks, boats and crucial logistical assistance, and Cetacea for the underwater slates used for test scoring.



Along the Dominican Republic's Samana Peninsula, visitors find secluded bays perfect for a picnic lunch on a scenic sand beach, or even better, an effortless underwater photo expedition.

BY STEPHEN FRINK

Log

Dominican Republic

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC is one of the most popular Caribbean vacation get-aways—for Europeans. For North American divers, the jury still seems to be out.

There is no question that the beaches are among the best in this hemisphere, and the gorgeous all-inclusive resorts a bargain. But not all Dominican Republic dive options are equal. Ask a diver who has been to Punta Cana, and you may hear of rubble reefs, marginal vis and bumpy seas. But ask a diver who has sampled Bayahibe, and you'll be regaled with stories of 100-foot-plus visibility, fascinating shipwrecks, good marine life, and even crystal-clear freshwater caves. Know where to go and what to do, and the Dominican Republic will not disappoint.

And vacationing visitors flock to this island nation for more than just diving. There is whitewater rafting and hiking in the mountains; golf on truly world-class courses; whale-watching in Samana Bay; sunbathing on 250 miles of white sand beaches; and rich Caribbean culture, both contemporary and historic, in Santo Domingo.

(A VISUAL TOUR
ABOVE AND BELOW)

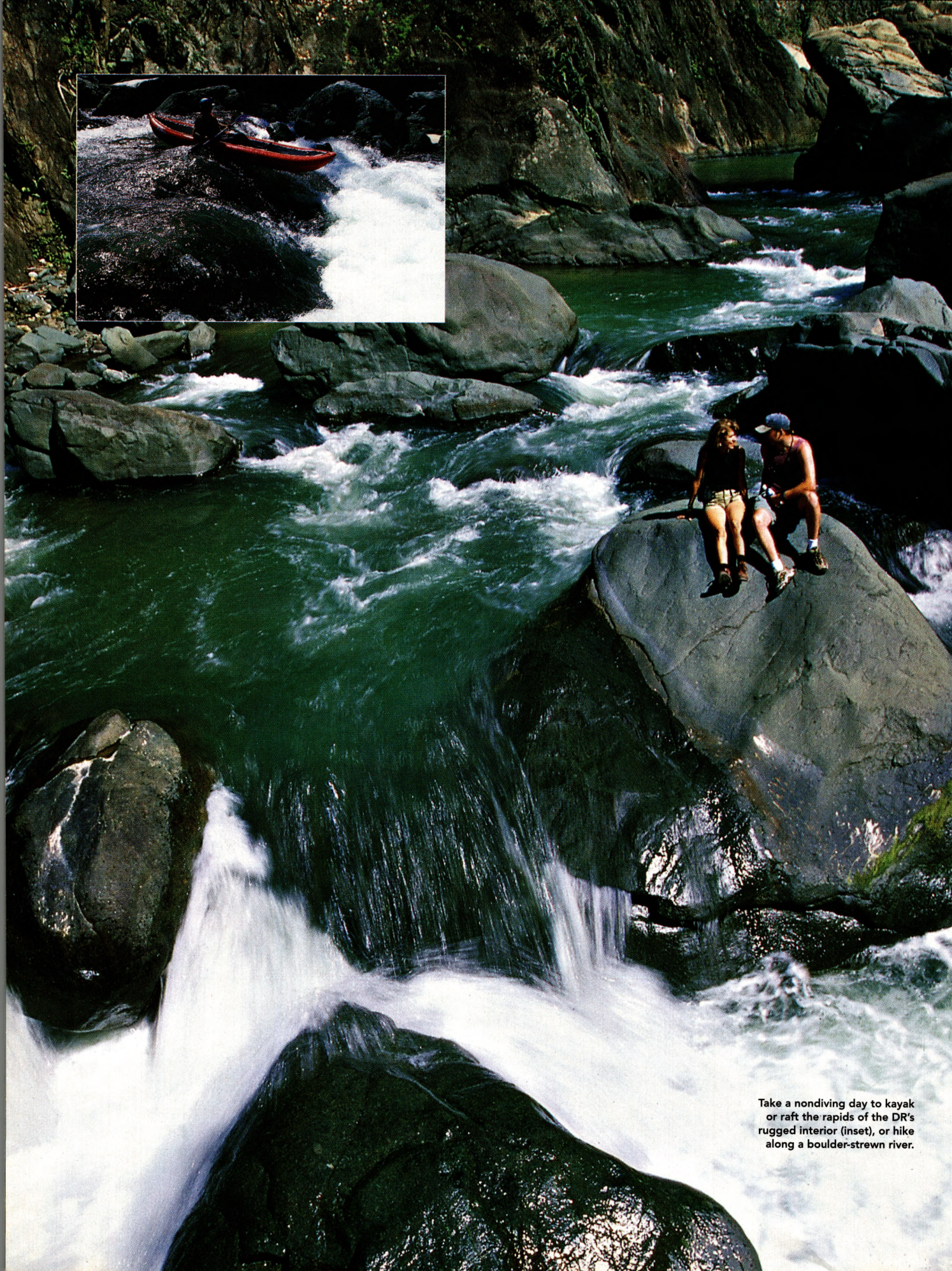
DON'T EXPECT DIVE OPERATIONS in the Dominican Republic to be outfitted with a fleet of 46-foot Newton dive boats. Most of the dive boats are open skiffs in the 24- to 32-foot range, typically powered by twin outboards. American divers may be scarce here, but the DR's dive professionals are experienced in serving a large European clientele. You'll find them to be friendly and outgoing because hospitality is a way of life in this island nation. Dominicans seem especially eager to share their signature underwater wonders with visitors: The shipwrecks of the *Hickory* and *El Limon* off Boca Chica; Bayahibe's premier dive and snorkel destination, Catalina Island; the Cabo Cabron Pinnacle off Samana; the wreck of the *Tanya V* off Juan Dolio, and the calm coves that dot Puer-to Plata and the North Coast.



Sunk off Boca Chica in 1986, the wreck of the *Hickory* lies in 65 feet of water, giving divers plenty of bottom time to explore the colorfully encrusted superstructure.

The Coral Costa Caribe is just one of the all-inclusive resorts that dot the shoreline of the Dominican Republic. There are more than 50,000 hotel rooms in the DR.

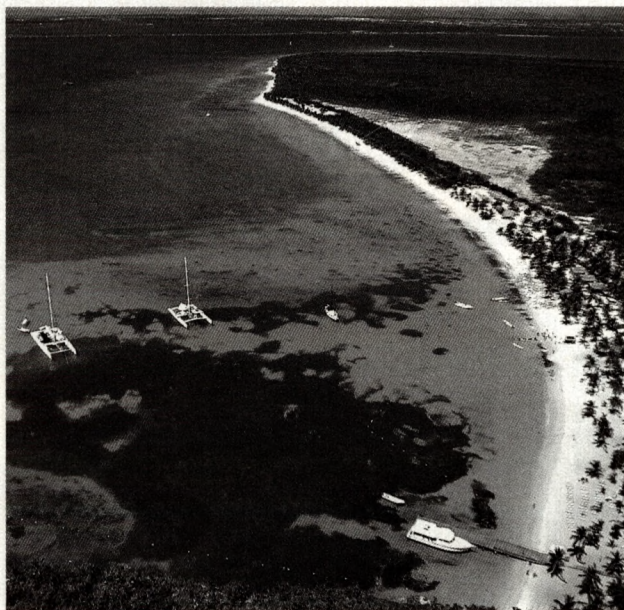




Take a nondiving day to kayak or raft the rapids of the DR's rugged interior (inset), or hike along a boulder-strewn river.



Azure vase and purple tube sponges dominate the mini-walls of the Samana Peninsula. Below: Boatloads of Dominicans and visitors flock to uninhabited Catalina Island daily.



THE OFFSHORE ISLANDS OF CATALINA and Saona are the Dominican Republic's top tourist attractions. Every morning, a flotilla of go-fast boats race from the lavish resorts of Bayahibe and congregate where the turquoise Caribbean laps sugar-white, palm-studded beaches. While that might be the perfect getaway for sun worshippers, divers spend their bottom time 100 yards off these islands, along their walls.

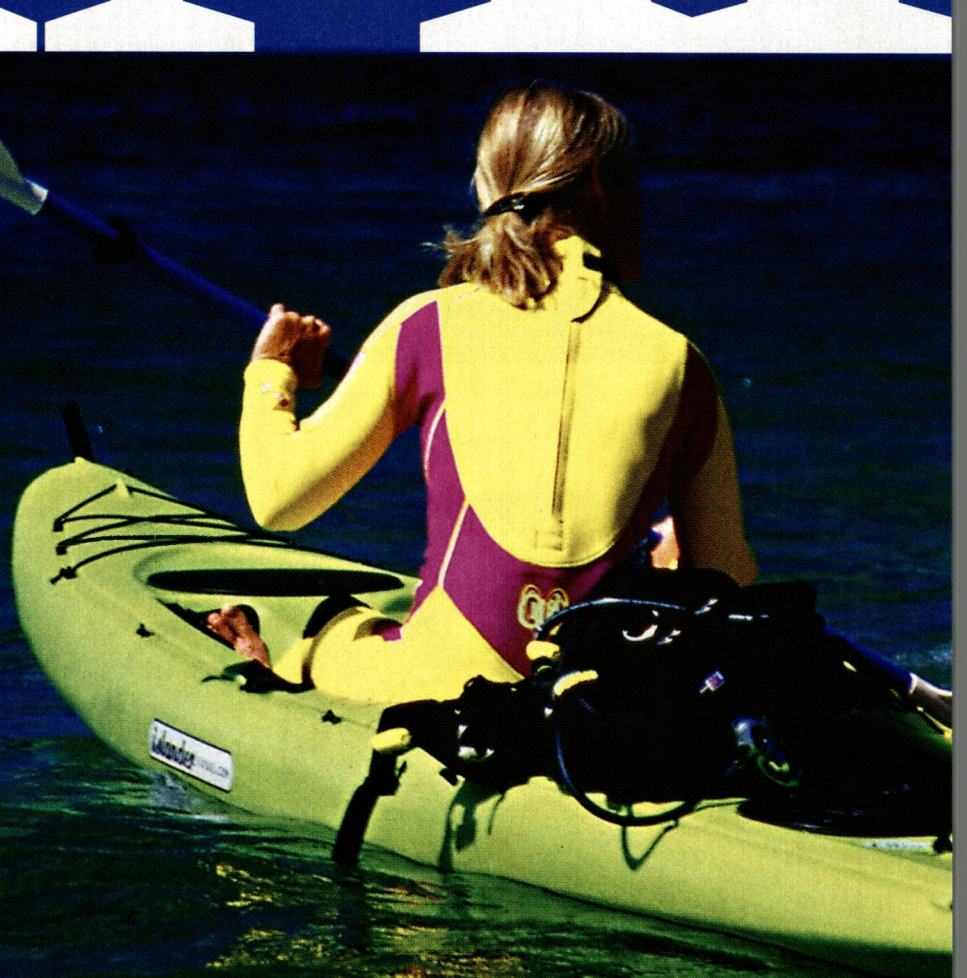
For those willing to tolerate a bit longer boat ride, Catalinita Island faces the Atlantic coast, where sharks, eagle rays and other pelagic animals get divers' adrenaline pumping. Here spur-and-groove coral formations slope to a dramatic mini-wall pockmarked with hiding holes perfect for eels and lobster.

Whether you're a newbie looking to complete an open-water certification or a jaded Caribbean dive veteran, the Dominican Republic is likely to surprise you. Do your homework so you'll know exactly what to expect. There are parts of the Dominican Republic, especially for divers, that are significantly greater than the whole.

GET THERE

➤ For more information on the Dominican Republic, turn to In Depth, page 110, section 5.

KAY



BECAUSE GETTING THERE
SHOULD BE HALF THE FUN.

PAK

as OUT V I D

A man in a wetsuit is seen from behind, paddling a yellow inflatable kayak on a dark blue ocean. A large white paddle is visible, angled across the frame. The background is a deep blue sky and sea.

BY JOHN FRANCIS

"LOOK OUT!" RICK SCREAMED. "HERE COMES A WAVE!" Still pulling the starter cord of the outboard, I looked up in time to see the nose of our inflatable dinghy kicked skyward by an avalanche of water. Then there was only darkness and the roar of the surf.

We popped to the surface seconds later amid our own flotsam of tanks, dive gear and a cap-sized dinghy. That great nearshore reef we'd been dreaming about—the one too far to swim and too close for a charter boat—would remain unexplored another day.

Experience is a wonderful teacher, and now I know what we should have done. We should have shot a hole in the inflatable, dumped the outboard in a dumpster and found a couple of dive kayaks.

The right paddle-powered boat is a shore diver's wet dream. It gets you and your gear past the surf line with ease ("You'll never walk in off the beach again," promises Mark Theobald, California's leading dive kayak guru) and extends your exploring range by miles. Past the surf line, a kayak serves as a stable support platform where you can take a rest, change tanks, eat your lunch and keep your hat dry.

Maybe best of all, modern dive kayaks, especially the polyethylene sit-on-top variety, are nearly indestructible and virtually unsinkable. And paddles, in my experience, never fail to start.

The Basics of Kayak Diving

EVEN IF YOU CAN'T tell port from starboard, you can handle a modern sit-on-top dive kayak. A few minutes of basic paddling instruction are all you need to get started. Combining kayaking and scuba does add a few challenges, however. You've got gear to stow and secure. And you've got the problem of getting into and out of your gear, and into and out of the water. Then there's the issue of what to do with the kayak while you're diving. And did we mention surf?

Clearly, there are skills you'll have to learn, and the fastest way to master this form of diving is the kayak diving specialty course. Here's a sample of what you'll learn.

LOADING THE KAYAK

If you think space is tight on a six-pack dive boat, wait until you start loading a kayak. There's room for everything you need, but not much more, so you've got to think carefully about where and how you stow every item.

You'll wear your boots and wetsuit, at least the bottom half. Roll down or take off the top half for easier paddling. (Dry suit divers will have to wear the whole thing through the waves, but can peel down again outside the surf line.)

The rest of your gear—weights, tank, regs, BC, mask, fins, whatever—will go in hatches or be strapped to the top of the kayak. It's easiest to pre-assemble the scuba unit, tank, BC and regs, so it's ready to go when it's time to suit up.

Two things to watch here: Keep the weight centered and low. And make sure everything is both tethered and tied down tight. If you're prepared for the most spectacular multiple-endo wipeout, it probably won't happen. But Neptune punishes laziness.

The beauty of sit-on-top dive kayaks is that they come with a pre-molded tank well and adjustable quick-release straps. Place the pre-assembled unit into the well, tank on the bottom, and cinch down the straps. Then inflate the BC until it's tight against the rope.

As far as the placement of other gear, "be organized" is Marty Sen-



The Boat

What to look for in a dive kayak.

Sit-on-top kayaks are the best choice for diving for several reasons.

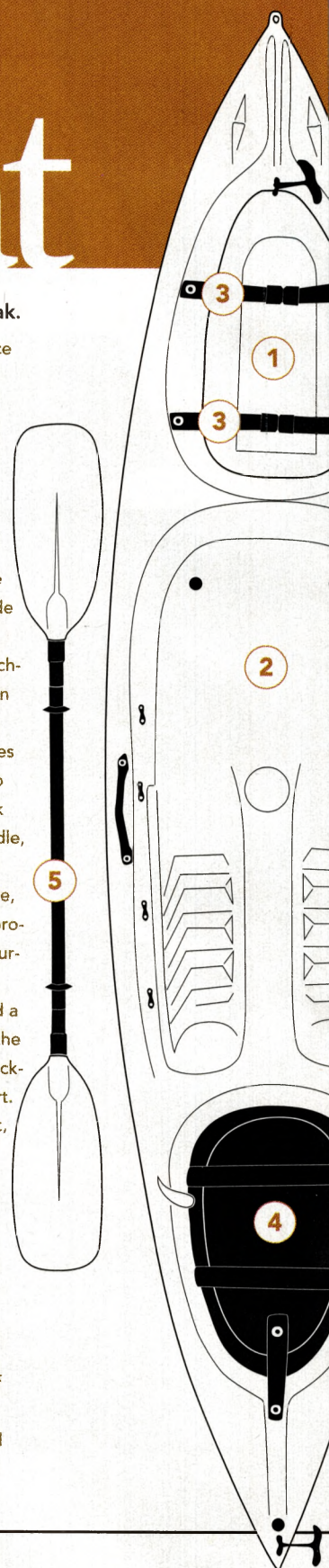
Inflatable or rigid, they offer greater stability (important when you're loading/unloading dive gear or changing tanks) and they are easy to paddle. Look for a molded tank well (1) behind the cockpit (2), with straps (3) to secure your gear. Sealed hatches (4) provide storage space for everything from weight belts to dry bags. Some hatches are even large enough to store an extra tank.

Dive kayaks come in many shapes and sizes, from one-person boats to tandems. Long, narrow kayaks track better, are faster and easier to paddle, but clumsy in surf. Short ones are more stable and more maneuverable, but carry less weight. A good compromise is the type usually called a "touring" kayak, about 12 feet long.

You'll also need a paddle (5) and a paddle strap to keep it secured to the boat while you dive. An optional backrest is a smart investment in comfort. Don't forget an approved life jacket, a dive flag and a small anchor.

Some electronics might make your day. A VHF radio is better than a cell phone if you need help. A sonar "fishfinder" will show you the bottom contour of the site before you dive it. A GPS will help you find it again accurately. All of these can be hand-held, waterproof and fairly cheap.

Add a dry bag, water bottle and sunscreen, and you're ready to roll.





Double your paddle power and carry twice the gear in a tandem kayak.

DAVID FLETHAM (PREVIOUS SPREAD); TIM O'KEEFE (TOP); HENRY POWERS (FACING PAGE & BOTTOM)

etra's first advice to the novice. He's a longtime kayak diver in Crystal River, Fla. "Think through what you're going to do, what piece of gear you're going to need first." Think FILO. First in, last out.

You'll also want to tie each major or indispensable piece of gear to the kayak with a tether. It's the astronaut principle: a short piece of line can prevent your fins from drifting off into liquid space when you're looking elsewhere. Tethers also help retrieve gear that's stored inside the kayak. Otherwise your mask may run to the end of the kayak and, like a cat, refuse to come out.

SURF ENTRY AND EXIT

Even if Rick and I had been in kayaks that fateful day, the result might have been the same. Punching through big surf takes experience and until you have it, you should avoid any waves bigger than ripples. That said, the entry procedures are pretty much the same whether the surf is big or little.

Drag your loaded kayak to the edge of the water and watch the surf to get the rhythm of "sets" and "lulls." Don't rush it. When a lull (a series of smaller waves) has just begun, go. Pull the kayak out to about knee-deep water, give it a last push, jump on and paddle.

Again, just two basic rules: keep the kayak pointed directly into the waves, and paddle like hell. If the kayak gets sideways, even small surf can tip you. Point straight into it and you'll be amazed what you can punch through. If you're swamped by a wave, lean back and hold your paddle high until it passes.

Returning through the surf is basically the same story. Again, take some time to watch the waves; sets and lulls are harder to see from the ocean side. When the time seems right, go in on the backside of a wave, just behind the crest. Keep the other pointy end, the

stern, toward the incoming waves. Paddle hard to catch up with the crest, then stay just behind it. With luck you'll be carried all the way to the sand, so make sure you're aimed toward a soft landing. When you stop going forward, jump off quickly and grab the kayak. You don't want to be sucked backward into the next wave.

With experience, you can surf larger waves. That means getting in front of the crest, turning away from the break and leaning into the face. To keep your speed up, lean back and keep the bow high. It's a huge rush when you get it right—and a spectacular wipeout when you "endo." That's when you go over the crest, the bow digs in and the stern passes over your head.

Both going and coming, the most important thing to adjust is your attitude. Think of it this way: Your gear is secure, and you're wet anyway, so what's the worst that can happen? If a landing turns into body surfing, well, body surfing is fun too. And don't be embarrassed: Wipeouts happen to everybody.

If you're going to fall off in surf, fall to the ocean side so the kayak isn't washed over you. That means keeping your weight toward the ocean side. You can use your paddle like an outrigger if you extend it to the ocean side with the blade flat but aimed slightly upward.

THE DIVING

Now the easiest part of all, the actual diving. Only entries and exits from the kayak are new experiences. Once again, there are two important rules: One, put your fins on first and take them off last. If you straddle the kayak with fins in the water you gain tremendous stability, and if you fall off you have propulsion. Fins are also essential for getting back aboard.

Did we say "fall off?" Yes, it happens. Usually



the kayak starts to tip and you instinctively push against the low side, which only guarantees that the kayak will flip over on top of you. Instead, drop low and get your weight to the middle of the kayak. And if all else fails, remember you were planning to get wet anyway.

Two, keep everything attached to the kayak until it is attached to you. Knives, masks and even full tanks are surprisingly eager to dive without you, so you can't have too many tethers.

Most kayak divers put on their scuba unit while in the water. The sane way is to get in the water with it and try to put your arms through the arm holes, as if you were on land. Float it tank-side down, push the butt of the tank down and back into the BC. Little or no air in the BC and a trim weight around the butt of the tank will help it stand vertical in the water. Keep your BC unit tethered to the kayak until you've succeeded.

Show-offs prefer the over-the-head maneuver. Again, start with just a little air in the BC and face the valve end with the tank level, the BC underneath. Arrange the hoses and "butterfly" the BC. Put your arms through the arm holes and grab the neck of the tank. Sink a little, push it down and throw it over your head just like Mike Nelson used to do. Then lie on your stomach to buckle up. Breathing while doing this is the problem—keep your reg in your mouth.

Oh yeah, parking. You've got three options: tie your kayak to a mooring, take an anchor down with you on your first descent or tow the kayak behind you like a big dive flag. Before you descend, make sure hatches are securely closed and that your paddle is secured to the boat with its own strap.

EXIT STRATEGY

Techniques for reboarding the kayak borrow heavily from deepwater exits, though if you try to pull yourself up from the water, you'll only succeed in flipping the kayak. Here's a better way. Remove your weight belt, place it in the kayak and secure it with a tether. Now add

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT KAYAK DIVING?

What kayak divers enjoy most about our form of scuba is, well, everything—from the swirl of water along our kayaks to the camaraderie with our fellow paddlers to the great upper body workout.

But the greatest thing about kayak diving is the freedom it gives you to explore new sites, or just to visit old ones when and how you want. And no other form of scuba provides such a personal connection with the dive environment.

A few other reasons to love paddle-powered scuba:

- You get through the surf easier.
- You can go farther, to almost any on-shore dive site.
- You save air for the dive, not the entry and exit.
- Currents and rips are no problem.
- You can talk with your buddies while you paddle.
- You can squeeze into tight spots a big boat wouldn't dare try.
- No diesel fumes or engine noise.
- The diving's free (except parking and air fills).

PLUS: You can play bumper boats!



Tow your boat: Drifting with your kayak is an alternative to anchoring.

a little more air to your BC before removing and tethering it as well.

Keep your fins on your feet. Float on the surface at a right angle to the kayak, with your hands on top. Kick a couple of times to get your legs on the surface, then kick hard and lunge forward until your stomach is onboard. Roll onto your butt, then pivot to a sitting position as you swing your feet onboard. "BBF: Belly, butt, feet" is the mnemonic Mark Olson, a Santa Barbara, Calif., kayak dive instructor gives to his students.

Putting things away is the reverse of getting them out. Don't forget tethers and tight lashings.

Join the Club

WHILE THE KAYAK COURSE gives you the overview of skills, you'll really learn by doing. Once you know the basics, it helps to find (maybe start?) a local kayak dive club. Tag along with other kayak divers who can show you the ropes and some of their favorite sites. Kayak diving is a very social sport, and if you're lucky, you'll find enthusiastic buddies like Olson.

"You're right on the water with the birds and sea lions, you can get closer to the rocks and reefs than you ever have before, it's quiet and you know you got there yourself. Then you can go diving where and when you want. It's an incredible combination," he says. "I've been kayaking and diving for 17 years and it still makes me say 'Wow!'" **SD**

GET THERE

➤ For more information on kayak diving, turn to In Depth, page 110, section 6.

ETHAN GORDON (TOP)

The Sites

NINE KAYAK-READY DIVES

When you're a kayak diver, any beach is a possibility. Use your mobility to explore, or try one of these proven favorites.

Monterey, Calif.

MONTEREY BREAKWATER

The protected cove behind this 200-yard-long rock jetty in Monterey Bay is an easy place to put in, and there are several great dives within paddling distance. New kayak divers can play around in the kelp forest, explore the jetty for eels or frolic with sea lions. Stronger paddlers head northwest, following the coast as far as McAbee Beach.

Carmel, Calif.

POINT LOBOS STATE RESERVE

Access to the reserve is limited to just 15 dive teams a day (register by calling (831) 624-4909 or online at <http://pt-lobos.parks.state-ca.us>). Kayaks are welcome. Put in at the small ramp in Whaler's Cove, but paddle around the point to Bluefish Cove where current-swept pinnacles explode with strawberry anemones and pink and purple hydrocorals. Topside, there are restrooms and picnic facilities, not to mention acres of breathtaking scenery.

Santa Barbara, Calif.

REFUGIO STATE BEACH

Several finger reefs and ledges lie just off the beach and the point to the west, parallel to each other and to the shore. Kelp stands harbor opaleyes, garibaldis and calico bass, as well as purple and black urchins. A grassy area just

behind the beach is perfect for gearing up.

Puget Sound, Wash.

SUND ROCK

A series of ledges and a wall drop to about 70 feet at Sund Rock. You'll find a variety of Pacific Northwest invertebrates here, like painted anemones and *metridium* anemones, not to mention giant Pacific octopuses. Get air fills at Hood Sport and Dive on Highway 101 in Hoodspurt, and put in at their boat ramp, just a quarter-mile north of the prominent rock.

Anacortes, Wash.

DECEPTION PASS STATE PARK

Look for Pacific king crab along the western shore of tiny Northwest Island, but don't touch: the area is a protected sanctuary. From Rosario Beach, it's a quarter-mile paddle to Northwest Island. Henry Powers, a kayak diver and instructor at Whidbey Island Dive Center, recommends anchoring on the sheltered side of the island, and then swimming the short distance around the island to the exposed west side where the wall drops to 130 feet. Just beware of strong currents.

Cape Ann, Mass.

FOLLY COVE

Near the tip of Cape Ann, Folly Cove is one of New England's few real wall dives and its fissures are

loaded with anemones, red gill nudibranchs and sea stars "two feet across," says Aaron Fauls of Boston's East Coast Divers. The wall is a 250-yard paddle from the beach and plunges to a sand bottom at about 40 feet.

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

KAYUBA REEF

The local Kayuba dive kayak club has adopted this mushroom-shaped coral table as its local favorite. It's a shallow dive, 15 feet to the top of the grooved reef and 30 feet to the sand, but the reef shelters everything from spadefish to barracuda. Kayuba Reef is just north of Sunrise Reef, which is straight out from Sunrise Avenue at Highway A1A. To contact the club, check www.kayuba.com.

Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles

KLEIN BONAIRE

The 500 yards that separate Klein Bonaire from the main island are

an easy paddle. Head for Nearest Point, and from there explore northward, toward Ebo's Reef and its photogenic grove of orange elephant ear sponges. A kayak also lets you dive the middle zones between the mooring buoys and visit parts of the reef boat divers rarely see. Several operations on Bonaire offer kayak dive certification courses and guided kayak dives.

Maui, Hawaii

HAWEA POINT TO MANAMALU BAY

Expect giant green sea turtles "as big as the hood of a VW," says Eden McAfee, of Kapalua Dive Company, when you take a guided kayak dive tour from Kapalua Beach. It's a half-mile paddle to Hawea Point, where divers drift slowly toward Manamalu Bay. Along the way you'll see complex lava ridges and tubes covered with hard corals and a diverse fish population—from surgeonfish to eels.

Paddling off Klein Bonaire.





L E S S O N S
F O R

Life

(DIVE ACCIDENTS, CLOSE CALLS,
& HOW YOU CAN AVOID THEM)

by Michael Ange

FILE :

64
#

(THIS IS A TRUE STORY,
BUT THE NAMES HAVE
BEEN CHANGED.)

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

Ill-prepared for ocean currents, an out-of-shape diver panics with fatal results.

IT MUST HAVE SEEMED LIKE A CRUEL JOKE. Rene struggled forward, kicking as hard as she could, but the anchor line never seemed to get any closer. Just minutes into the dive, she was already exhausted, her heart was pounding, and every panting breath did little to satisfy her constant craving for more air.

Still kicking to reach the line, she crashed onto the wreck at 90 feet. Allen was nowhere in sight. She glanced at her gauge and discovered that she had already used two-thirds of her air. Anxiety immediately turned to panic, and Rene grabbed her power inflator and began clawing her way up into the water column. She had to get to the surface. She had to get air.

THE DIVERS

Rene was a certified open-water diver in her late twenties. She had logged a number of dives, most of them in quarries and lakes. Although she considered herself in good health, Rene was a classic couch potato with poor cardiovascular conditioning. Her dive buddy, Allen, was a few years older with slightly more dive experience, but he also had made only a few ocean dives.

THE DIVE

The Pacific Ocean was cool, but visibility was good in spite of choppy surface conditions and a brisk wind out of the west. The dive boat anchored over a current-swept wreck lying at a maximum depth of 95 feet. The dive briefing provided the divers with the depth, gave the orientation of the wreck, and noted a

quarter-knot surface current. The captain directed the divers to use the surface line to pull themselves from the stern to the anchor line before descending.

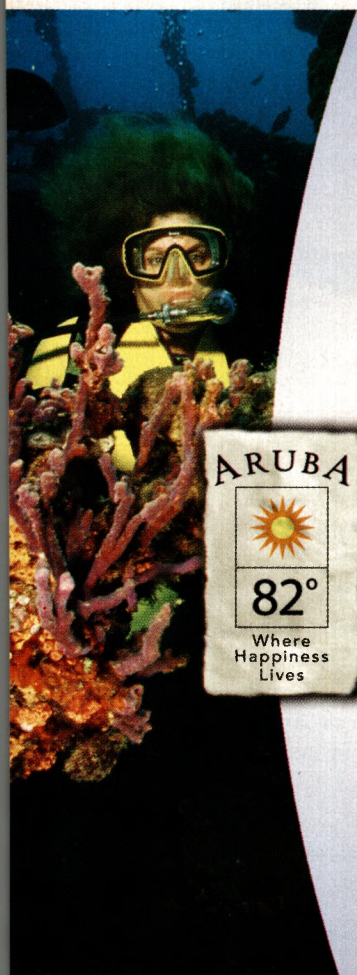
Feeling seasick from the moderate chop, Rene and Allen were the first divers to enter the water, but instead of pulling themselves along the current line, the pair began swimming forward. The surface chop and the physical exertion aggravated Allen's queasiness, and he threw up on the surface. Regaining his composure, Allen signaled to Rene that they should descend immediately to avoid the chop, then swim for the descent line. Rene flashed an OK sign and both divers lifted their BC inflator hoses to dump air and begin the descent.

THE ACCIDENT

As they turned into the current and

began kicking, Allen was glad to be out of the chop, but suddenly anxious about making his first free descent in the open ocean. The line was in sight about 15 yards ahead, but the deeper he sank, the more the line angled away from him. Finning against the current, Allen kicked harder and harder, but never seemed to get closer to the line.

He looked up and ahead to see Rene also struggling. A constant stream of bubbles swirled out of her regulator, trailing off in the current behind her. As she descended, Rene also kicked toward the anchor line with increasing intensity. Unaccustomed to such physical exertion, she was experiencing high levels of carbon dioxide in her bloodstream. This, along with the anxiety created by her lack of progress toward the line, caused her breathing rate to accelerate.



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Making matters worse, the constant descent meant each breath of air was more dense than the last, decreasing the efficiency of gas exchange in her lungs. She was caught in a classic panic cycle: The faster she breathed, the higher her carbon dioxide level. The higher her carbon dioxide level, the faster she tried to breathe. As her anxiety grew, it's likely that Rene also experienced a fixation on reaching the descent line, which always seemed to elude her grasp.

Allen was also finding it difficult to breathe. The wreck was in view now, and Allen slowed his pace, content just to reach the bottom and duck into the lee behind the vessel. Rene continued swimming forward, still trying to reach the descent line.

When Rene crashed onto the deck, Allen noticed her movements were erratic.

When she turned to look at her pressure gauge, Allen saw the panic on her face. Before he could reach her, Rene grabbed her power inflator and bolted toward the surface. Her rapid ascent was soon out of control and she popped to the surface, well down current from the boat. She spit out her regulator and ripped off her mask to scream for help, but choked on seawater. By the time the crew arrived to help, Rene was unconscious and no longer breathing. Attempts to revive her were unsuccessful.

ANALYSIS

Rene's poor physical conditioning would not have been fatal had she and Allen followed the captain's instructions.

Seasickness further weakened their physical condition and probably added significant psychological stress. SD

LESSONS FOR LIFE

1 LISTEN TO DIVE BRIEFINGS.

Failure to follow the advice of the captain and crew is a common cause of diving accidents.

2 GET FIT. Diving in currents can require short bursts of physical exertion equivalent to running a sprint.

3 DUCK CURRENTS. The drag caused by gear makes swimming against moderate currents very difficult.

4 KNOW WHEN TO QUIT. If you begin to hyperventilate or become anxious, stop all physical activity and get your breathing under control before making a slow ascent. Remain calm: It's better to surface down current from the boat than to panic.

5 KEEP YOUR GEAR. Always keep your mask and regulator in place at the surface, especially in an emergency.

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2: Regulator: Mares M12 Proton An unassuming second stage features a mesh grid faceplate that's designed to reduce free-flows in strong current. The M12 Proton is a smooth breather in all positions and is drier than most regulators in its class. **\$299**

3: Fins: Oceanic Vortex V6 These quick and nimble fins are stiffer than most splits and give you turbo power in a pinch. They're also easy to control in tight quarters. **\$99.95**

4: Surface Signaling Device: Akona Safety Tube This orally inflated safety sausage is easily spotted in high-vis yellow. It's also an eyecatcher in the dark, thanks to its tube-mounted light. **\$24**

5: Backup Signaling Device: Dive Alert Horn It connects to your BC's power inflator to produce an ear-piercing shriek that can be heard a mile away. **\$50; \$70** for integrated safe second system.





T H E R E

Where to Go

Papua New Guinea

DEEP IN THE HEART

of Melanesia is a place

where the idea of adventure remains as authentic as it was when Portuguese explorers first landed there in the 16th century. If you're fortunate enough to get to Papua New Guinea, you'll discover colorful reefs at the epicenter of the world's greatest marine biodiversity, invertebrate-rich muck dives, and historic shipwrecks and warplanes. Not to mention some of the Pacific's best drift diving.

One of the best places to let the currents do the kicking for you is Magic Passage near Madang, on the northeast coast of the Papua New Guinea mainland. The pass is located between Lepa and Kranket islands, and if you hit it on an incoming tide, you'll drift past mantas, schooling barracuda, trevally and oriental sweetlips, as well as waving gorgonians and blossoming soft corals.

Baldwin's Bridge near Rabaul in the passage between New Britain and New Ireland islands is named for an enormous natural arch that's smothered in pink soft corals and frequently visited by tons of fish. Dip below the bridge in 85 feet of water to join packs of gray reef sharks cruising the formation. This dive is seasonal, so ask your dive operator about the best time to visit the site.

Kavieng is often called the pelagic capital of Papua New Guinea. Arrive at two-mile-long Planet Channel during incoming tide and you'll be rewarded with a mask full of blurred fish, sea fans, sea whips and a good chance of seeing the big stuff. At Eagle Ray Pass, you may be lucky enough to witness the resident school of more than two dozen eagle rays that congregates there twice daily. The tides change quickly here, so stay alert, and don't forget your safety sausage. **SD**

Off Papua New Guinea, if you find the current, you'll find the fish.

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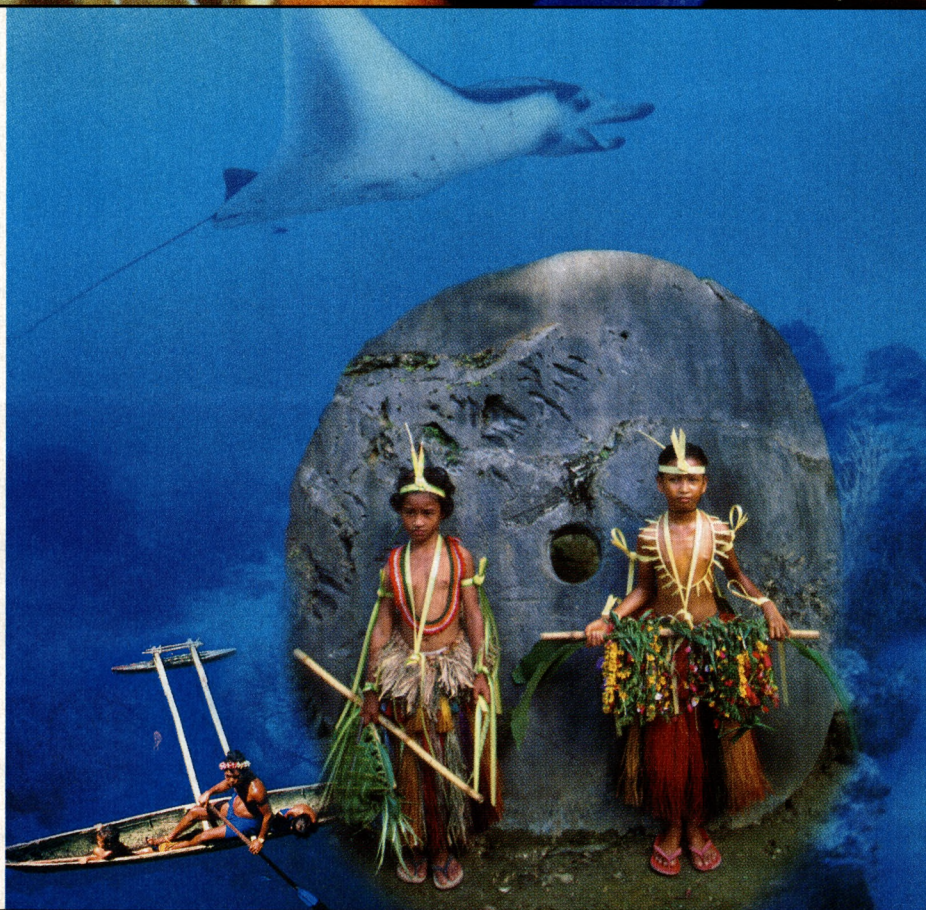
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Shooting Sharks

Tips for capturing killer photos of the ultimate predator. **TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN FRINK**

ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE FISH IN THE SEA, and the one most misunderstood and threatened, is the shark. Decimated by indiscriminate longline fishing, misguided sport anglers and the unspeakable devastation of the shark fin industry, sharks worldwide are in big trouble.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

In fact, some species are on the brink of extinction.

One of the most ecologically sensitive actions an underwater photographer can take is to picture the beauty, grace and majesty of these creatures in order to dispel the myth that sharks are out to get us and to educate people about their plight. In addition to promoting awareness, shark photographs are just cool. Here are some tips for bringing home the perfect shark shot.

GO WHERE THE SHARKS ARE

In the wild, sharks generally keep their distance from divers. We are big and noisy, and we must look very clumsy to them.

Given that successful underwater photography happens with a primary subject within three feet of the lens, we have to go where the odds favor getting a shark that close. Typically that happens where local dive operations have conditioned the sharks to come close by offering a bit of bait as reward.

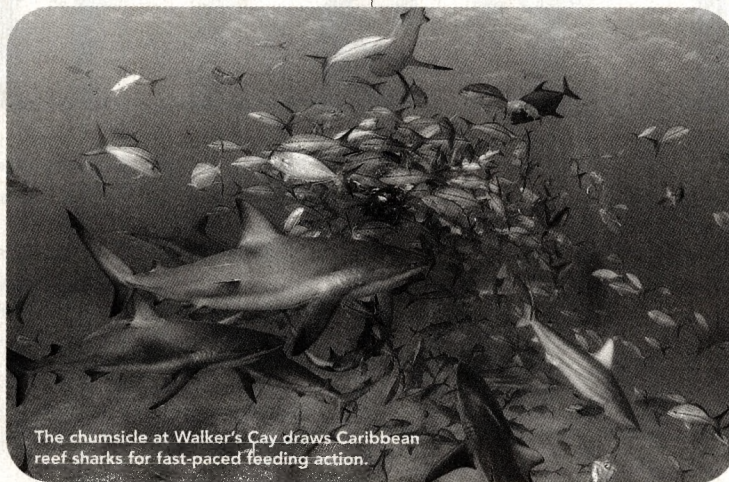
The way the bait is presented may be different in various places, but the result is the same. For example, Walker's Cay in the Bahamas uses a "chumsicle," a conglomerate

tion of fish and seawater frozen inside a large garbage can. The chumsicle is tethered in midwater while dozens of ravenous Caribbean reef sharks race in to grab a bite. Off the southwest end of New Providence Island in the Bahamas, operators show up at the site with a bucket of bait and the sharks start swirling. The frenzied activity offers the opportunity for awesome shots with more than a dozen sharks in a single frame. The last time I shot at Shark Wall, the sharks were so eager, we didn't even have to pull bait from the bucket to get the ultra-close shots we wanted.

Both of these are well-established shark feeds at specific reefs where a population of sharks have been safely interacting with divers for more than a decade. Other shark dives are newer, yet no less spectacular.

In Tahiti, the currents on an incoming tide race through the atoll channels, and gray reef sharks by the score are commonly sighted. Silvertips have likewise been conditioned to hand-feeding by local divemasters and come quite close.

But the premier shark photo-op has to be for the apex predator, *Carcharodon carcharias*. The great white shark is now the target of photo



The chumsicle at Walker's Cay draws Caribbean reef sharks for fast-paced feeding action.

safaris in diverse locales. Now that great white sharks are protected from sport fishing, the shark encounters are getting reliable again off South Australia. South Africa offers a higher density shark population off Dyer Island and excellent above-water viewing, as well as cage dives. Lately, live-aboards have been visiting Guadalupe Island, Mexico (about a 20-hour steam from San Diego), to photograph a resident population of up to 100 great white sharks in very clear water.

Other sharks, like the scalloped hammerheads found around the Galapagos Islands and Costa Rica's Cocos Island, do not respond to food and require a stealthy approach. Operators in these waters have learned where the sharks are and how to get close to them. Professional wildlife photographers know that one of the best ways to find out how to get close to them is to ask locals.

LISTEN TO THE SHARK WRANGLER

If you're trying to photograph a species that responds to food, get close to the bait. Hand-feeding methods vary substantially according to shark species and dive operator. The operator will tell you how to participate safely in their particular shark program, and while under water, watch the shark wrangler for direction.

If you want to get close to a species of shark that requires a stealthy approach, pay attention to the strategies the operator says will get you close. If they tell you racing after the shark won't work, believe them. Every week they see divers ruin potentially good encounters by being too aggressive. If they say tuck into a rock crevice and control your breathing so the shark comes near, follow their advice.

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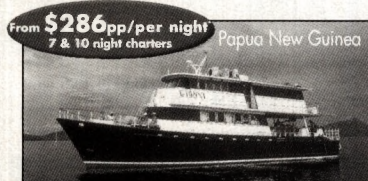
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PHOTOGRAPHY



Because sharks are big and fast, most photographers choose to shoot them with a wide-angle lens.

USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Most shark photography is wide-angle. The fish is usually five feet long or bigger and often moves relatively quickly. Getting a tight head shot with a lens used for reef fish is possible, but the extreme depth of field of the wide angle makes life much easier. Also, wide-angle perspective distortion can be used to make a large fish look even more impressive, especially if teeth are involved.

For Nikonos shooters, this probably means a 15mm lens. For those using housed cameras, a wide-angle zoom is often the best choice, usually with at least 20mm (94 degrees) at the wide end of the zoom range. The new digital SLRs are perfect for shark photography, especially because there are so many frames possible beyond the standard 36 film exposures. But beware of any camera that has shutter lag. When photographing sharks, you want to capture peak action, and the shutter delay from some consumer digitals is frustrating.

A wide-angle strobe, with diffuser, is necessary as well, but make sure it recycles quickly. Five seconds is an eternity when a shark is in your face and you're waiting for your strobe to power up.

USE THE RIGHT TECHNIQUE

A wide-angle lens preset to about three feet will handle the focus for most shark photography, but exposure and creative lighting can make all the difference between the magnificent and the mundane in photographs of sharks.

I like to hand-hold my strobe so that as the shark gets closer, closer, closer, I can move my strobe back farther, farther, farther. When the shark is in the shoot zone, I don't have time to play with apertures or to re-aim a strobe arm, so my instinctive adjustments in strobe-to-subject distance fine tunes both the angle and amount of light striking the shark. As the shark turns its white belly more toward the camera, exposure likewise changes. I find simply being nimble with the strobe position can accomplish a significant range of exposure adjustment.

Another problem photographers must contend with during shark feeds is the inevitable detritus, either from divers stirring up the bottom or from sharks shredding the bait. If the strobe is too close to the lens, backscatter can be a problem. Creative lighting is fundamental to successful shark photography.

PACE YOURSELF

Bottom time or the number of available exposures may limit you, so timing is important. During most feeding dives, the sharks will be tentative at the outset. It often takes one brazen shark to hit the bait before the activity ratchets up and the best photo-ops occur. Don't waste your shots on the sharks in the distant blue when they'll be up-close-and-personal later in the dive.

With schooling hammerheads, getting close-ups may be more difficult because you do not control the pace; they do. All you can do is position yourself where they are likely to be, and be ready. You'll see the bottom time clock ticking, and you may never get the shot. But when it does happen, give yourself extra points for degree of difficulty.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Some shark feeds can get rowdy. Sharks may be shy, but when there is lots of food in the water, they can get aggressive and make mistakes. In turbid water, a white arm might look like the flash of a fish, and while the shark wouldn't necessarily eat that arm, a sample bite will change your life. I dress in black wetsuit, hood, booties and even gloves when in the midst of a shark feed. The shark wranglers may opt for chain mail protection, but that's because they're holding bait or immersed in scent. For the shooter, choosing wardrobe that lets the shark know you're not the bait is a good idea.

Finally, if the feed gets uncontrolled or dangerous at any time, simply move away from the bait. Photographing sharks is fun and tremendously exciting, but that hot shot on your light table isn't worth sacrificing your safety. SD

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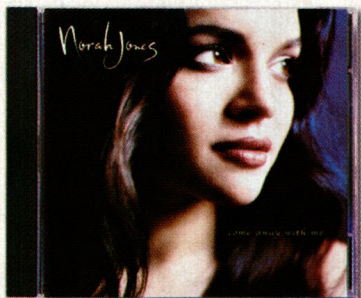


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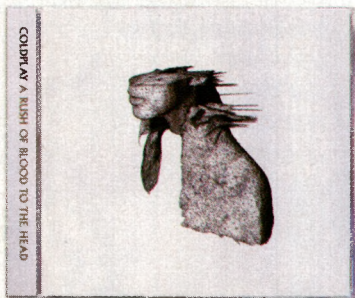
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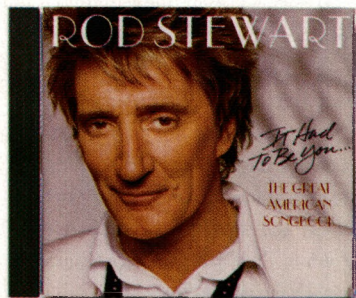
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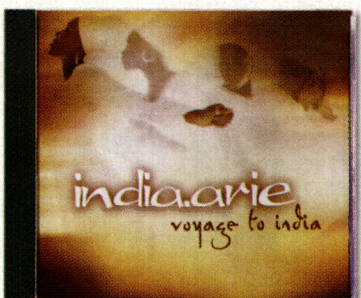
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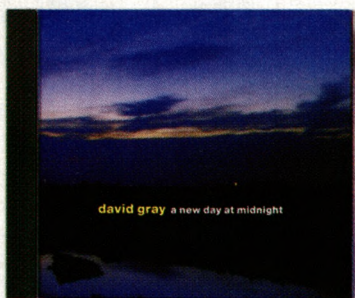
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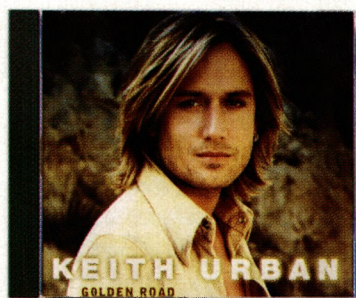
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JUST BEFORE sunset, we were cruising along the edge of Little Bahama Bank when we happened upon two juvenile spotted dolphins. They were on their own, separated from the pod, like a couple of teenagers looking for trouble.

I entered the water with freediving gear and a Nikonos III. The pair spiraled around me and then followed me to the surface. The dolphins hung motionless when I paused a few feet below the surface. The setting sun lit them beautifully, but forced me to shoot wide open at 1/60th of a second, a much slower shutter speed than I like to use when shooting dolphins. Thankfully, they stayed still long enough for me to shoot a quick portrait. —BOB TALBOT

Camera & Settings: Nikonos III with 15mm lens, f-2.8, 1/60 sec., Kodachrome 64.



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Don't Feed the Fish

Motion sickness strikes 90 percent of us. But there are ways to go to sea without getting sick. **BY SELENE YEAGER**

THE DRAKE Passage is where the swift-flowing southern ocean rushes like a battering ram between South America and Antarctica. It's a dark, heaving, turbulent stretch of water that has ripped the sea legs off many a seasoned sailor. This trip was no different. The two days through the passage en route to Antarctica were punctuated by 30-foot waves and 50-mph winds. "People didn't come down for two days to get a meal," recalls adventurous emergency-room doc Lewis Kohl, M.D., chairman of emergency medicine at Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Though the trip back was equally hellacious, most everyone fared just fine. The difference: "They got sea legs, sea sense—and patches," says Dr. Kohl. That's the story of seasickness in a nutshell: Everyone is susceptible. But with preventative behavior, and maybe a little medical intervention, we can all keep our stomachs calm on the highest of seas.

THE SCIENCE OF SEASICKNESS

Motion sickness is the result of what scientists call "sensory mismatch," says Dr. Kohl. "We rely on our senses to tell us what our body is doing. Our eyes, inner ears, tendons, muscles, ligaments and joints take in information and send it to our brain. When you're standing or sitting on a solid surface like a boat that is rocking around on the water, your brain gets too many mixed signals," he says. It gets confused, and you get sick.

Though some travelers seem more susceptible to motion sickness than others, 90 percent of all people will suffer a bout of it at some point in their lives, whether aboard a boat, plane, car or roller coaster. And even if you've never

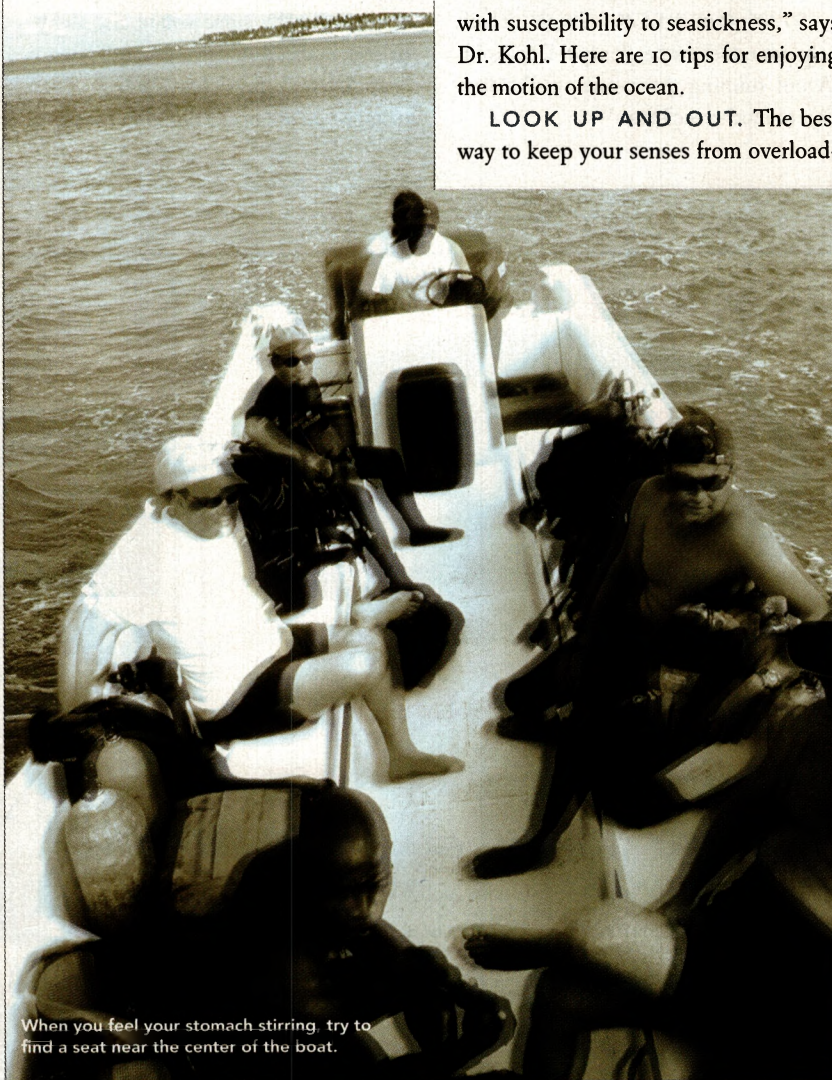
experienced motion sickness before, you're not immune, though the likelihood does decrease somewhat with age, says Eric L. Weiss, M.D., assistant professor at Stanford University and board member of the International Society of Travel Medicine.

CALM THE QUEASE

No one wants to toss a hard-earned vacation along with their cookies. But even if your gills turn green at the slightest chop, there are simple, nonmedical steps you can take to keep your stomach settled the next time you're at sea.

"Personal behavior has a lot to do with susceptibility to seasickness," says Dr. Kohl. Here are 10 tips for enjoying the motion of the ocean.

LOOK UP AND OUT. The best way to keep your senses from overload-



When you feel your stomach stirring, try to find a seat near the center of the boat.

ing is to stare at the horizon. "It's old wisdom, but people still forget and sit there staring at their feet," says Dr. Kohl.

TURN YOUR FEET. "Pitching fore and aft tends to make people sicker than side to side," says Dr. Kohl. "If you can, turn your feet so you are rocking side to side, and try to sleep that way, too."

CLOSE THE CHAPTER. The worst thing you can do is read. It magnifies the sensory mismatch. Ditto other close-concentration tasks.

SIT TOWARD THE CENTER. Try to find a point on the boat where the motion is at a minimum, says Dr. Weiss. "Stay off the bow, and try to stay close to the center of the boat."

STAY ON DECK. "Fresh air will help you feel better," says Dr. Kohl. "Avoid running downstairs at the first sign of motion sickness."

BRACE YOURSELF. Sitting with your back and neck supported can calm your senses. "An upright lounge chair close to the center of the boat on deck is the ideal," says Dr. Kohl.

GET ENGAGED. Being anxious and preoccupied about getting sick increases the likelihood that you will get sick, says Dr. Weiss. "Try to engage others in conversation. Keep your mind otherwise occupied."

EAT A LITTLE. Low blood sugar will heighten your feelings of nausea. Eat light, frequent meals to keep your stomach settled. "That doesn't mean pepperoni pizza," notes Dr. Weiss.

PARTY HARDLY. "Being hung over, especially since you're also dehydrated, makes you a prime candidate for seasickness," says Dr. Weiss. Even though you're on vacation, limit yourself

to one or two drinks with dinner.

SLEEP IT OFF. A sleep-deprived brain is an easily overwhelmed brain. Treat it right and get plenty of sleep the night before your dives.

DIVER'S LITTLE HELPERS

There's always the risk of your stomach giving you the old heave-ho, even when you're on your best behavior. So, it's smart to arm yourself with some tried and true seasick remedies. Here are your best preventative options.

THE PATCH. The medicated Transderm Scop patch (www.transdermscop.com), which you wear behind your ear for a steady dose of scopolamine, a drug that reduces the activity of nerve fibers in your inner ear, is one of the most popular and successful reme-

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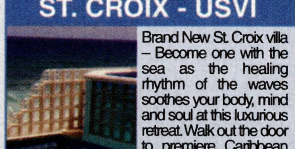
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dies for seasickness. "The dive doc was handing them out like candy on our trip to Antarctica," recalls Dr. Kohl. "And they helped nearly everyone on-board. There's nothing like them."

Like all medications, however, these patches are not without side effects. Most commonly, they make you thirsty. Blurred vision and drowsiness are also possible. Some divers cut the patch in half to maintain the motion sickness protection but reduce the side effects.

Other patch tips: The patch works best prophylactically, and is most effective if you put it on about four hours before you climb aboard. And wash your hands after applying the patch. "People get the medicine on their fingers, then inadvertently touch their eyes. The medicine dilates their pupils and makes them feel worse," cautions Dr. Weiss.

GINGER. Formal research on ginger is sketchy, but plenty of people swear by it, and there have been a few positive scientific studies showing its benefit against motion sickness. "It tastes good, it can't hurt you, and there are no real side effects," says Dr. Kohl. You can buy powdered ginger preparations in natural food stores. The usual recommended dose is a gram a day, starting about 12 hours before your trip.

DRAMAMINE AND COMPANIES. Over-the-counter antihistamines like Dramamine, Bonine and even Benadryl are perennial standbys against seasickness. They generally work by interfering with the sensory-nerve transmission. Some people get quick relief; others find themselves sleepy and dopey.

WRIST BANDS. There's an acupressure point on your wrist known as

P6 that purportedly relieves nausea when pressed. It's impossible to prepare for a dive with one hand on your wrist, so one company developed a product called Relief Band—a wristwatch-like device that delivers electrical stimulation to that point (www.reliefbands.com). "We were all pretty skeptical when these came out," concedes Weiss, "but they're FDA-approved and they have some research supporting their claims."

The band can set you back \$70 to \$80. It pays for itself if you dive frequently and depend on over-the-counter medications. But it can be an expensive experiment for the recreational diver who dives only occasionally.

And keep your money in your wallet when you see cheaper imitation bands that don't provide electrical stimulation. Most experts say they're worthless. **SD**



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Stay put. If the boat left you, it will soon be searching for you.

Stranded at Sea— Now What?

What to do if you surface to an empty ocean. **BY JOHN FRANCIS**

AT THE END OF A DIVE, you finish your safety stop and make a slow ascent right where you expect the swim step to be. But when you break the surface, you find there is no swim step. In fact, there's no boat. Now what are you going to do?

This may not be the end of your diving career. If you've been left behind, sooner or later somebody is going to come looking for you. Probably it will be sooner.

(STEP 1)

FIND OUT IF IT'S REALLY GONE.

Your eyes are only a few inches above the water, and the boat can be hidden by surface chop. Fully inflate your BC so you get as high as possible, pivot 360 degrees and scan the horizon. Take it slowly to be sure. If you see the boat, blow your horn, fire off a flare, wave your inflatable sausage, whatever. Motion is what catches the eye.

(STEP 2)

GET YOUR BEARINGS. Maybe you're the one who has bugged out. Maybe you swam around a point of land or were carried around it by a current. Get your bearings relative to where you left the boat, and try to get back to it. If you're in luck, you'll find the boat there, the divemaster wondering where you've been.

(STEP 3)

STAY CALM. Conserve your energy and remind yourself that you will be missed and the boat will return for you. Keep your sausage inflated and your eyes open. Trying to swim for shore is probably a bad idea because it's farther than it looks, the effort will tire you out and you'll be leaving the area your rescuers will search first. (Current will carry you away from the dive site, but rescuers will search down-current.) And most important, remain calm.

(STEP 4)

HEAD FOR SHORE. At some point, swimming for land might be the only move left. Hypothermia can become deadly, even in tropical water, and in the dark you'll be almost impossible to find unless you've got a strobe.

Drop your weights and your tank for less drag, keeping the BC if at all possible. (Now you know why you have a snorkel.) Aim for the closest land whether populated or not, taking account of the current. And pace yourself. Every so often, stop to rest and scan the horizon for rescue, especially in the direction of the dive site. **SD**

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Playing the Odds

The good, the bad and the truly disturbing news in the 2003 DAN report. Eighteen statistics you can learn from. **BY JOHN FRANCIS**

ACCORDING TO the Divers Alert Network (DAN), the average recreational diver has maybe a 3 in 10,000 chance of decompression illness on any single dive. Do the math: You could make 100 dives a year for 33 years before, statistically, your number comes up.

Now the bad news, also according to DAN: At least 1,170 divers were treated for decompression illness in 2001, and 77 of your fellow divers in the U.S. and Canada died with their fins on. (Actually, 76 died with their fins on. In one bizarre fatality, an inebriated diver didn't wear fins, but that was the least of his problems. See "Case Studies," p. 92.)

Don't Be a Statistic

You'll find these statistical gems and many more in the 133 pages of the 2003 *Report on Decompression Illness, Diving Fatalities and Project Dive Exploration*. The annual review and analysis of recreational scuba injuries and deaths is the best data yet compiled on the relative safety of diving. And while drawing firm conclusions from many of the numbers

is difficult, there are clues to safer diving contained in the pages of the report. In other words, reading a few statistics may help you avoid becoming one.

The following stats, which cover the year 2001, aren't perfect, but are probably representative of the sport as a whole. For the record, DCI statistics reflect only reported cases treated by recompression at DAN-affiliated chambers, and data on fatalities is limited to cases involving U.S. and Canadian citizens.

WHO GOT BENT?

Percentage of injured divers by highest level of certification.

72%

Open-water/Advanced open-water

10% Instructor

5.3% Tech Diver

2.1% Student

10.6% Other/Unknown

52

Percentage of injured divers who had been certified for less than five years. About 9 percent had been certified for less than one year, but 30 percent had been certified for more than 10 years. The lesson: Real dive experience improves safety, but the mere passage of time does not. Half of injured divers had made fewer than 20 dives in the preceding 12 months.

BY THE NUMBERS: INJURIES

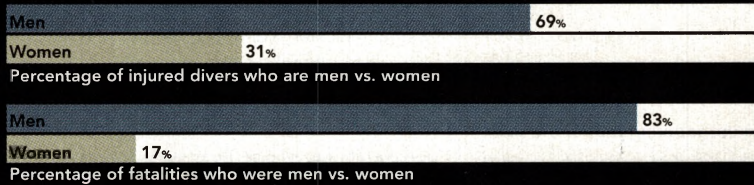
3 in 10,000: Approximate rate of decompression illness (the bends and arterial gas embolism) among recreational divers. It's an estimate, says co-author Dr. Petar Denoble, based on Project Dive Exploration, a controlled study of volunteer divers. Among the 2001 PDE divers, the DCI rate per 10,000 dives ranges from less than 1 for live-aboard divers to 10 for day-boat dive professionals and 37 for cold-water technical divers. Combining live-aboard results with shore/day-boat dives—"probably the best representation of average recreational divers we have," says Denoble—yields an average of 2.6 DCI cases per 10,000 dives. He warns, however, that PDE divers may not be representative of the sport as a whole.

33%

Percentage of student injuries that were AGE, which is almost always a result of a diver ascending while holding his breath. It's associated with lack of training and experience, and with panic.

MARS VS. VENUS

How the sexes fared in the DAN stats.



Percentage of injured divers who reported pain as a symptom of DCS. Other commonly reported symptoms include numbness (54 percent) and weakness (about 24 percent). Problems with higher cerebral functions ranked fifth at 15.6 percent.

18.62: Percentage of injured divers with upper respiratory infections. This was the most common pre-existing medical condition among injured divers, followed by musculoskeletal problems, smoking and previous DCI.

90: Median depth, in feet seawater, of dives leading to injury.

38.4: Percentage of all injuries (decompression sickness, AGE and lung barotrauma) that occurred on the first day of dive trips. Notably, 70 percent of all AGE cases occurred on the first day of diving. Nervousness or lack of recent dive experience can lead to discomfort, then anxiety, then panic and injury.

38: Median age of injured divers. The age range was 13 to 73.

1,170: Reported number of divers treated in DAN-affiliated recompression chambers in 2001. The breakdown: 900 in the U.S. and Canada, 126 in Europe, 80 in Southeast Asia, 53 in Japan and 11 in South Africa.

BY THE NUMBERS:

DEATHS

89.6: Percentage of deaths that occurred on the diver's first dive of the day.

60: Percentage of fatalities who were in the 40-to-59 age group. High blood pressure, heart disease and smoking were the most common chronic health conditions among divers who died. Many fatalities, especially in this age group, seem to be caused by heart attacks that lead to drowning, not by scuba risks per se.

60: Percentage of fatalities with buoyancy problems.

Case studies can be found on p. 92.

U.S. and Canadian dive fatalities reported to DAN in 2001. That's the smallest number since 1989. The number of diving deaths has been trending downward since DAN began keeping records, although the number of dives taken is believed to have increased. Credit better instruction and better equipment.

Percentage of reported fatalities on technical dives.

Percentage of injured divers reporting some kind of problem on the dive that led to injury. The three most commonly reported problems, in order, were rapid ascent (about 21 percent), feeling cold (about 12 percent) and exertion (about 11 percent). There's no proof that these problems actually caused the injuries, however.

WANT A COPY?

DAN members can download the *2003 Report on Decompression Illness, Diving Fatalities and Project Dive Exploration* as a PDF file from the DAN web site: www.DiversAlertNetwork.org. Nonmembers can buy a hard copy by calling (919) 684-2948.

Continued from p. 91

Case Studies

Perhaps the most sobering part of the DAN report is the Case Studies section where you'll find short summaries of representative accidents and fatalities. Many of these accidents were preventable, and in the case of sever-

al fatalities, well, some can hardly be considered "recreational diving" as most of us would define the sport. A few examples:

DIVING AND DRUGS DON'T MIX

Case #01-57: An intoxicated 47-year-old male dropped his cell phone off a pier one evening, and returned later with dive

gear to recover the device. Witnesses say he dived from the pier without a buddy or fins. Fishermen found the man's body the next morning. An autopsy revealed his blood alcohol level was twice that of the legal limit for driving.

Case #01-59: A 38-year-old male diver had both advanced open-water certification and a history of alcohol and narcotic use. After a few beers with friends, he made a shore entry into water just 10 to 15 feet deep and never returned. When the body was recovered four days later, the tank was empty and toxicology tests were positive for tranquilizers and recent cocaine use. The victim's blood alcohol level was more than three times the legal limit for driving.

CAVE DIVING WITHOUT PROPER GEAR OR TRAINING

Case #01-64: A 23-year-old male with no proof of open-water certification, much less technical training, was teaching a group of friends how to cave dive. As part of a tour in a freshwater cave system, the "instructor" attempted to lead his students into a narrow restriction and became wedged inside the tunnel. It took recovery divers two days and the assistance of heavy equipment to extricate the body from the cave.

FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF SAFE DIVING RULES

Case #01-26: A 39-year-old male was a very experienced diver with a history of decompression illness. He hadn't dived at all in the previous year when he entered a spearfishing contest and made five repetitive solo dives to depths greater than 165 feet. During the dives, he experienced problems with his computer and BC. After his fourth dive, he was experiencing symptoms of decompression illness, but descended again to 180 feet after a surface interval of just 10 minutes. After surfacing from his final dive, he complained of respiratory distress and was taken to a local recompression chamber, where he died after treatment. **SD**

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Your Life in a Bottle

Short of breath? Not if you have a bailout bottle. **BY MICHAEL ANGE**

OUT-OF-AIR OR LOW-ON-AIR emergencies can happen to any diver and for any number of reasons. Tanks may get a short fill or skipped over entirely at the fill station. Equipment failures can lead to an unexpected loss of breathing gas, or, more commonly, divers simply forget to check their gauges while diving. One solution to these problems is a redundant air supply. Also known as pony bottles or bailout bottles, redundant gas systems ensure you can get safely to the surface in case of an emergency.

SIZE MATTERS

Redundant gas systems come in two basic varieties. The first is a traditional cylinder containing between 13 and 30 cubic feet of gas, and equipped with a completely redundant first- and second-stage regulator and submersible pressure gauge. These cylinders are typically mounted to brackets or inside bags attached to the primary cylinder and tucked tight against the diver's BC.

The second type of system is a very small cylinder containing between 1.7

The bailout system you choose will depend on the depth of the dive and your breathing rate.

and 3 cubic feet of gas. It incorporates both regulator stages, a purge valve and mouthpiece into one small device affixed directly to the cylinder. Compact integrated cylinders attach to the BC harness in a quick-release pocket. They're much lighter, and the entire system can be passed to another diver.

There are some obvious differences in the two types of systems. The first is

cost. A cylinder with a separate regulator will typically cost more than an integrated bailout system. Another issue to consider is the added weight and bulk of a traditional bailout cylinder. A 13-cubic-foot cylinder is more than four times the size of a 3-cubic-foot cylinder. Also, the regulator hose of a traditional cylinder increases drag and creates an additional entanglement point.

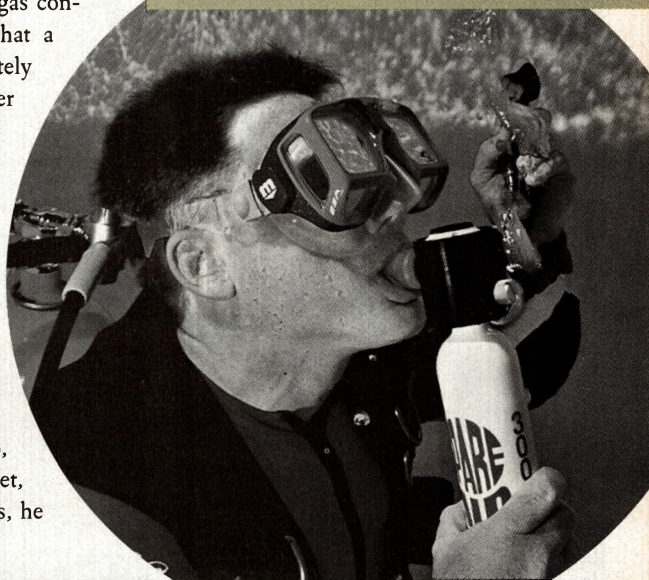
HOW TO CHOOSE

The type of bailout system you choose will depend on the depth of the dive and your personal rate of gas consumption. Let's assume that a diver consumes approximately 0.75 cubic feet of gas per minute at the surface, a fairly common respiratory minute volume (RMV) for recreational divers (see "Calculating Your Consumption Rate," p. 94). For every 33 feet of seawater our diver descends, his RMV is multiplied by an additional atmosphere of pressure. So, if our diver dives to 66 feet, home of three atmospheres, he

WHAT ABOUT MY OCTOPUS?

Although common and easy to use, your octopus, or alternate second stage regulator, has its limitations. First, it's of little use to you in the most common instance of equipment failure—that of your own micro-processor. If you forget to check your pressure gauge until you've collapsed the tank walls, the alternate performs no better than the primary.

Effective air sharing requires close proximity to an attentive dive buddy. Even if your buddy is nearby, it can take several long seconds to get his attention. Finally, there is the minor problem of confusion with the various types of alternates. While the traditional octopus is straightforward, the receiving diver often inserts the second stage in his mouth upside down, a position that causes "wet" breathing. Complicating matters further, some divers use a regulator integrated into their BC inflator. This system requires the donor to give up his primary regulator and switch to the alternate, which can cost precious seconds in an emergency.



will use 2.25 cubic feet of gas in one minute of normal breathing.

A diver who runs out of gas because of some additional problem, such as entanglement in monofilament line, will soon find himself out of gas again if his backup gas supply is between 1.7 and 3 cubic feet. At 132 feet, or five atmos-

pheres, our diver's RMV jumps to a staggering 3.75 cubic feet. At this depth, a 3-cubic-foot cylinder is unlikely to provide enough gas even for an immediate, direct ascent to the surface at the table-mandated rate of 60 feet per minute. We haven't even considered the matter of a safety stop, a safer ascent rate

of 30 feet per minute or the accelerated rate of consumption that usually results from an emergency situation.

Integrated systems may get you to the surface if you're diving in shallow water, but dives below 60 feet require a larger supply of redundant gas. On the other hand, an integrated system may be used for a horizontal swim to a buddy who can provide an alternate air source, rather than a vertical swim to the surface. Plus, if you're out of air and have to make an emergency ascent, one or two breaths is better than none.

CALCULATING YOUR CONSUMPTION RATE

How do you ensure you're carrying an adequate supply of redundant gas? To

PONY BOTTLE Q&A

Q: Can I fly with a pony bottle?

A: Yes, if you drain your cylinder completely and are prepared to remove the valve for inspection. When you check your bags, notify the counter agent that you are transporting a small diving cylinder, that it has been drained and that you would like to submit it for inspection. They'll want to confirm that it's been emptied, but you probably won't be asked to remove the valve.

Q: How do I get air fills for my pony bottle? And what about inspections?

A: Filling a traditional pony bottle is the same as getting an air fill for your primary cylinder, which means it requires an annual visual inspection and a hydrostatic pressure test every five years. Filling integrated cylinders, however, is a do-it-yourself job. A refill adapter allows you to fill these bailout systems from any traditional scuba tank.

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calculate your consumption rate and how much of a reserve you'll need, follow these steps:

➤ Go to a dive site with a level bottom at a relatively shallow depth. A swimming pool at 10 feet is ideal. Descend to the bottom, and record your air pressure. (Our diver has 3,000 psi.)

➤ Swim at a moderate pace for 10 minutes at a consistent depth. Stop and immediately record your ending air pressure. (Our diver has 2,650 psi.)

➤ Subtract the ending pressure from the beginning pressure to determine the amount of gas used in psi (3,000 - 2,650 = 350 psi).

➤ Since you will be using cylinders of dissimilar size, we must convert the psi of gas used to cubic feet. The conversion factor is obtained by dividing the cylinder's rated capacity (80 cubic feet) by its rated pressure (3,000 psi). This gives you the number of cubic feet in every psi of tank pressure ($80 \div 3,000 = .0267$ cubic feet per psi).

➤ Multiply the conversion factor by the psi used, and you get the total number of cubic feet of gas used during your swim ($.0267 \times 350 = 9.35$ cubic feet used).

➤ Now, divide this number by 10 minutes to obtain the number of cubic feet used per minute ($9.35 \div 10 = 0.94$ cubic feet per minute).

➤ The next step is to take our consumption rate to the surface. Convert depth to atmospheres absolute (ATA) by dividing depth (10 feet) by 33 and adding one for the surface atmosphere ($10 \div 33 + 1 = 1.3$ ATA).

➤ Now, divide your consumption rate by atmospheres to obtain your surface respiratory minute volume, or RMV ($.94 \div 1.3 = .72$ cubic feet surface RMV).

Now you have all the data you need to calculate the required size of your redundant gas supply. If the diver in our example planned a no-deco dive to 130 feet ($130/33 + 1 = 4.93$ ATA, rounded up

to 5 ATA), how much air should he carry in reserve?

ANSWER: At 5 ATA, he would use 3.6 cubic feet per minute (.72 surface RMV $\times$ 5 ATA = 3.6 RMV at depth). At a safe ascent rate of 30 feet per minute, he'll need at least 4.3 minutes for ascent, so he'll need 15.5 cubic feet for his

ascent. (For safety, figure all usage at the maximum depth. $4.3 \text{ minutes} \times 3.6 \text{ RMV} = 15.48$ cubic feet, rounded up to 15.5.) How about a three-minute safety stop at 15 feet? ($15/33 + 1 = 1.45$ ATA. $1.45 \times 0.72 \times 3 \text{ minutes} = 3.13$ cubic feet.) After adding the safety stop, our diver needs at least 18 cubic feet of gas. **SD**

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W W W . D U I - O N L I N E . C O M



Buying Gear on the Web

You may save money by purchasing equipment online, but at what cost?

Q: I'm about to buy my first set of dive equipment. I would love to buy from a local dive shop, but when I can get the same reg or BC for much less on the internet, I have a hard time justifying it. Will a shop do the yearly maintenance and will the manufacturer honor the warranty if I make an online purchase? —*via e-mail*

A: There's no such thing as a free lunch. You can't realistically expect to get the benefits of an internet price while still getting the benefits of dealer support and a manufacturer's warranty. When you save on the price, you have to give something up.

You'd have to check with the manufacturers that make the gear you're thinking about buying because each might have a different policy, as it might for each piece of gear in the company's catalog. A warranty is a contract between you and the company and, outside certain legal minimums, anything goes. But there are several reasons why the warranty might be void when you buy from an individual (in an online auction, for example) or from a mail-order house:

Send us your questions, and we'll get you answers: edit@scubadiving.com.

> Warranties usually are issued only to the original buyer. This is not unreasonable, because the manufacturer has no knowledge of or control over what the first owner might have done to the product before he sold it to you.

> Dealer inspection and prep. Some gear such as BCs and regulators may need to be partly assembled, adjusted and inspected by a dealer who is trained to do it and is responsible for the outcome.

> Proper function may depend on proper size selection. That's certainly the case with BCs, wetsuits and dry suits. A dealer is trained to fit you correctly—and the task is hands-on.

In general, manufacturers feel that once a product has passed through the internet on its way to you, there's no telling what may have been done to it by whom, or whether it is the genuine article or a phony knock-off.

You should own your gear, for reasons of safety and convenience. But if a warranty is important to you, you should buy directly from a dealer.

AIR-INTEGRATED COMPUTERS: WRIST VS. CONSOLE

Q: What are the practical advantages of a wrist-mount air-integrated dive computer over a console-mounted air-integrated computer? —*via e-mail*

A: Where you mount your dive computer is purely a matter of personal preference. But unlike non-air-integrated computers and console-mounted air-integrated computers, wrist-mounted air-integrated computers require a transducer to transmit tank pressure data from the regulator first stage to the wrist-mounted receiver. The advantages of this kind of computer are that you wear it on your wrist and you streamline your gear by eliminating a hose.

The disadvantages are:

> By eliminating the console, you lose

a good place to mount your compass—of course, you can clip a compass to a retractor and hang it just about anywhere (an option that some divers prefer over console mounting).

> Wrist-mounted air-integrated computers are susceptible to interruptions in transmission from the transducer. If this happens, it isn't an earth-shattering problem because it's only temporary and you lose data for about a second.

> Because they use a transducer instead of a hose, wrist-mounted air-integrated computers are a little more expensive than console-mounted units.

—JOHN BRUMM

BREATHING LESSONS

Q: I'm a new diver and had no trouble breathing easily during my first half-dozen dives or so. However, on a recent trip, I found it difficult to breathe through my mouth, and had to suck long, deep breaths just to keep myself going. I used a lot of air in a little time. What are the possible reasons for this, and how can I remedy it? —via e-mail

A: There are several reasons you might have had more trouble breathing:

DIVING DEEPER. At depth, air is denser, thus more viscous and harder to suck through the regulator and even your throat. It's like the difference between sucking water and sucking a milkshake through a straw—the milkshake requires more work.

BREATHING FASTER. Inhaling faster has the same effect. You may have been working harder because of a current, or you may have been a little nervous. Either causes you to breathe faster than the reg can easily accommodate, so the resistance to your breathing goes up.

REGULATOR PROBLEM. Were you using the same regulator? Regulators differ in the "work of breathing" they require, which you may experience as

more resistance to breathing. Or your reg may have developed a problem. If you can eliminate the other causes, have your regulator serviced.

TIGHT WETSUIT. Breathing requires you to expand your chest, and if the wetsuit you wear fits you too tightly, it will make breathing more difficult.

Which is most likely? The most common reason for what you describe is nervousness, which causes faster breathing. It's normal for new divers and even experienced ones in new situations, and you may not even be aware that you're nervous. Concentrate on taking slow, deep breaths. —JOHN FRANCIS **SD**

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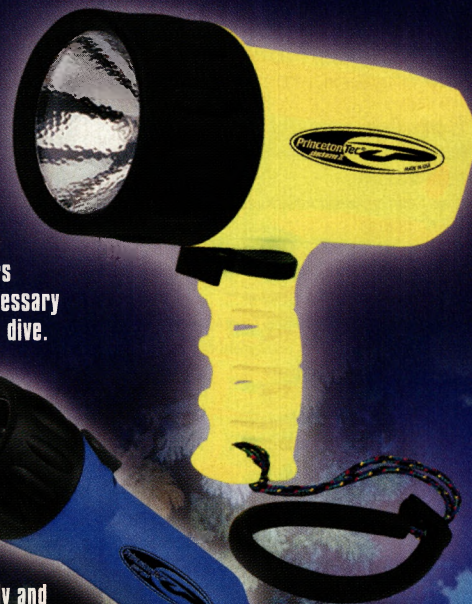


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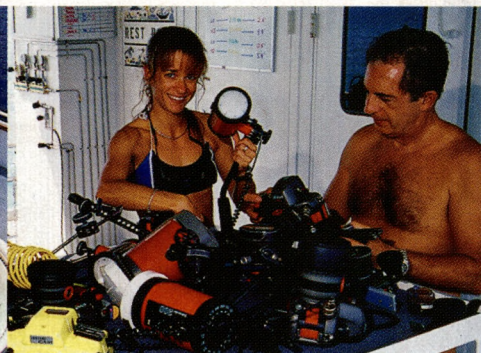
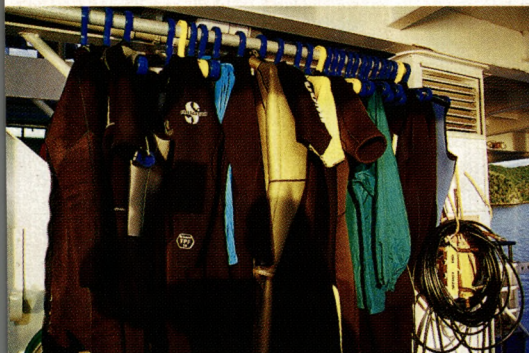
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Live-Aboard Advantages

Of course, land-based dive resorts are great and will always hold a place in the hearts of every diver. But, if you love diving and dive travel, live-aboards are an appealing alternative or addition to a land-based vacation.

Some of the many draws to live-aboard diving may include:

- Lower overall cost.
- Unpacking just once (this includes clothes and dive gear).
- More daily dive offerings.
- Diving flexibility.

- Generally smaller dive groups.
- More remote, less-explored dive sites.
- Convenient onboard photography and video services.
- Advanced certification courses and other educational offerings.

Like taking a cruise, the all-inclusive cost of a live-aboard trip can be more economical than a land-based dive vacation. If you compare costs, the savings can (but won't always) include expenses for accommodations, food, beverages, diving, and other travel expenditures.

For gear-laden divers, you only have

to unpack once on live-aboards, even though you're visiting many places. This means that, once onboard, you can take your clothes and dive gear out of your bag and not have to repack until the end of your trip. You also don't have to lug your dive gear around each time you go diving.

Live-aboards also offer more diving each day. The average is typically four or five dives a day, but it's really up to the individual diver (given proper surface intervals, of course). If you want to dive lots during your precious vacation time, the sheer quantity can be an advantage.

There's also great flexibility when it

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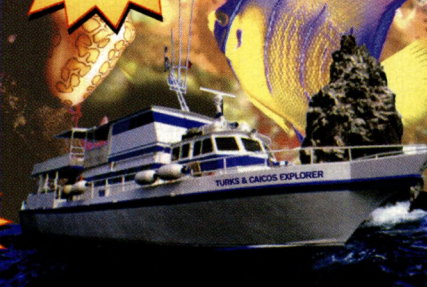


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comes to live-aboard diving. If the conditions aren't good at a certain site, the ship can simply change locations. If the group tends to like diving on wrecks, that's where the live-aboard can concentrate.

The diving off live-aboards tends to be in smaller groups as well. This can be just because the boat doesn't carry many divers or it can be because they stagger dive groups, giving everyone a chance to explore dive sites with just a few others (sometimes just a dive buddy).

Live-aboards also tend to offer less-explored reefs, wrecks, and other dives land-based resorts can't reach. This is thanks to their ability to go to (and stay at) sites land-based dive boats simply can't reach in a reasonable amount of time.

Live-aboards typically offer full photography and video service to shooters, allowing participants of all skill levels to see their work and apply lessons to future dives. There are also frequent instructional opportunities or programs with profession-

als available for amateur underwater photographers wanting to enhance their skills.

Other educational programs and advanced certification courses make live-aboards floating classrooms. It seems like the perfect environment to learn if, like many divers, you're ready to go back to school.

Of course, there are many other reasons for planning your first or 50th live-aboard trip. These include, but aren't limited to: more enjoyable surface intervals (the amenities can be world-class); lack of



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tropical insects (they're generally not as bad at sea as on land); better reef conditions; the like-minded company of passionate divers; built-in socializing for single travelers; and generally more adventure above and below the surface.



Each live-aboard company and boat offers varied amenities and programs. From the bare necessities (and low costs) to every amenity imaginable, there's a live-aboard experience and boat to suit anyone's needs. Generally speaking, however, most live-aboard package prices will include a cabin, bathroom facilities, most or all meals, some or all beverages, and diving. The offerings will differ when it comes to things like airfare, airport transfers, land-based accommodations and meals, alcohol, special dives, tips, pho-

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A Live-Aboard Packing List of Possibilities

• **Equipment:** mask, snorkel, fins, booties, regulator, BCD, alternate air source, dive computer, exposure suit(s), dive light, and gear bag.

Additional gear possibilities include: backup dive computer, compass, dive knife, gloves, weight belt, dive slate, log book, photography equipment, spare batteries, and film or video tapes.

You might also want to include manuals for any complicated or new equipment, as well as fish ID materials (many live-aboards have these).

• **Paperwork:** airline tickets, passport, live-aboard reservations, c-card, medical insurance proof, cash (don't forget crew tips, when appropriate!), and an international calling card.

• **Clothing and personal items:** appropriate medicines (possibly including seasickness tablets), casual clothing appropriate to the conditions, several swimsuits, appropriate footwear, beach towel, and sun protection.

tography and video services, and additional instruction.

If the live-aboard options have you salivating saltwater at the possibilities, you should take your research online and on the phone. It's easy to check out a wide variety of web sites run by both dive travel operators and specific live-aboard companies. This process of research will easily lead you to the ideal live-aboard vacation.

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For 16 years Explorer Ventures has offered quality live-aboard diving vacations at a very reasonable cost.



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The *Turks & Caicos Explorer* will begin offering week-long excursions from Providenciales to West Caicos and (weather permitting) French Cay in October 2003. Eighteen divers will enjoy the private state-rooms or value-priced double cabins, indoor dining area, roomy upstairs entertainment, sitting area and sundeck, and nitrox.

The *M/V Nimrod Explorer* offers live-aboard enthusiasts the ultimate dive vacation Down Under along the Far Northern Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea. Trips of four to ten days ferry divers to sites inaccessible to land-based operators.

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The 112' *Solmar V* will comfortably accommodate 22 passengers and 10 staff. All inside areas are air-conditioned, and all 12

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Mike Ball Dive Expeditions

Mike Ball Dive Expeditions provides dive itineraries for the adventurous diver seeking big fish, deep walls, shark action and wreck diving in Australia & Papua New Guinea.

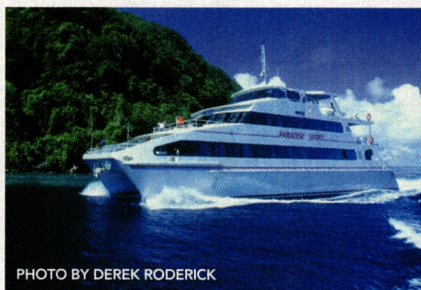


PHOTO BY DEREK RODERICK

Mike Ball Dive Expeditions vessels *Su-persport*, *Spoilsport* and *Paradise Sport* have won numerous prestigious awards including 18 *Rodale's* Readers' Choice Awards for Best Live-aboard Crew, Favorite Pacific Live-aboard, Live-aboard with the Best Food and Most Environmentally Sensitive Live-aboard. These twin-hull catamarans provide more space and comfort with greater stability, making diving easy and comfortable. Special services include one crew member for every three guests, exceptional meals, underwater photo & video service, unlimited diving, nitrox & solo diving.

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the Southern Bahamas.

The Nekton live-aboards feature spacious private cabins with twin or queen bed; private head and shower, 2,000 sq. ft. sundeck with jacuzzi, nightly presentations; E-6 processing; elevating dive platform and nitrox on the *Nekton Pilot*.

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Odyssey Adventures

The *Odyssey* has been voted Best Live-Aboard in RSD's Readers' Choice Awards for the past three years.



Departing from Truk Lagoon, Micronesia, the 132' *Odyssey* contains nine staterooms with ensuite facilities and individual air conditioning controls. Amenities include E-6 processing, camera and slide tables, large dining area, full galley and free nitrox.

From the *Odyssey* you can dive the ghost fleet of Truk Lagoon, as well as the outer reefs where you'll see more than 300 varieties of soft and hard corals, an abundance of tropical fish, anemones, gorgonians, eagle rays and even frenzied shark feedings.

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In October, 2003, the *Turks & Caicos Explorer* will begin offering week-long itineraries from Providenciales to the world-renowned reefs and walls of Provo's northwest point, West Caicos, and, weather permitting, French Cay. Offering accommodations for 18 divers in both private staterooms and value-priced double cabins, the ship will have an indoor dining area, a roomy upstairs entertainment and sitting area, sundeck, and nitrox.

Down in Australia, the power catamaran *M/V Nimrod Explorer* offers live-aboard diving enthusiasts the ultimate dive vacation—regular and exploratory voyages along the Far Northern Great Barrier Reef and out into the Coral Sea. Visiting pristine dive sites inaccessible to land-based operators, the 18-passenger *Nimrod Explorer* offers trips from four to 10 days along the Ribbon Reefs to Cooktown, the Cod Hole, and the Far Northern Reefs. The vessel offers true wilderness diving expeditions, with special opportunities like diving with Dwarf Minke Whales.



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Fantasy Island's Fantastic Fall Seven-Night Special runs September 13th to December 19th (Nov 22-28 excluded) and starts at just \$999 per person, based on double occupancy (taxes not included). The special provides: round-trip airfare from Dallas; airport transfers; welcome drink; accommodations; three meals daily; three single tank dives daily; one night dive; unlimited shore diving; tanks, weights, and belt; and free use of kayaks.

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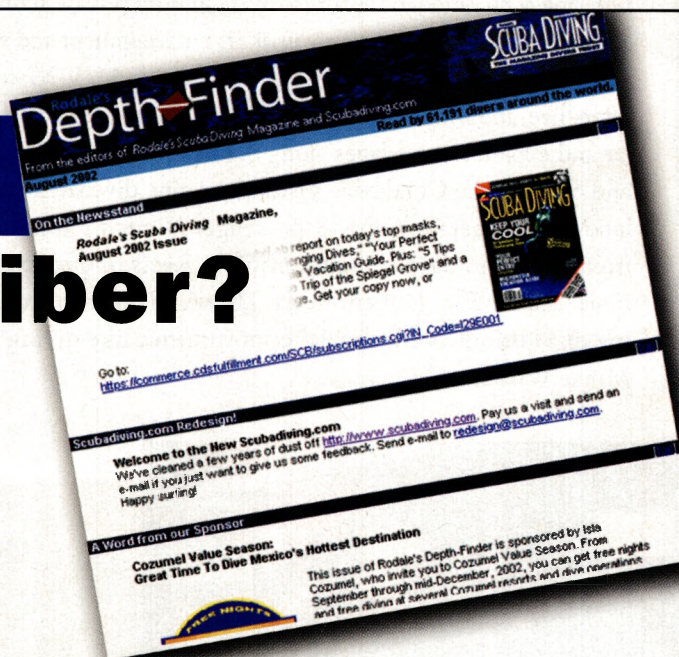
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Depth

1



C-53, COZUMEL, P. 15 • Most operators have strict guidelines for diving C-53, and will take only small groups of advanced divers. For a list of Cozumel dive operators, plus comprehensive travel guides and more, go to www.scubadiving.com/tripfinder.

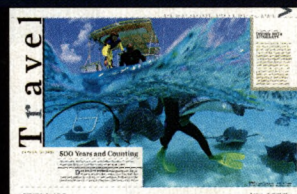
BROWNING PASS, BRITISH COLUMBIA, P. 16 • Water temps are the same year-round (42F to 50F), but the ideal time is May through October. **Dive Operators:** Clavella Adventures, (877) 725-2835, web: www.clavella.com; God's Pocket Resort, (888) 534-8322, web: www.godspocket.com; Mamro Adventures, (250) 756-8872, web: www.mamro.com; Nautilus Explorer, (604) 657-7614, web: nautilusexplorer.spincaster.com.

KELLESTON DRAIN, TOBAGO, P. 18

• Water temps are about 80F in summer; between 68F and 71F in winter. **Dive Operators:** AquaMarine Dive, Ltd., (868) 639-4416, web: www.aquamarinedive.com; Manta Dive Center Ltd., (868) 639-9209/9969, web: www.mantadive.com; Proscuba Dive Centre, (868) 639-7424, web: divetobago.hypermart.net; R&Sea Divers, (868) 639-8120, web: www.rseadivers.com; Tobago Dive Masters, (868) 639-4697; Wild Turtle Dive Safari, (868) 639-7936, web: www.wildturtledive.com; World of Watersports Caribbean Ltd., (866) 486-2246, (868) 660-7234, web: www.world-ofwatersports.com



2



CAYMAN ISLANDS, P. 34 • **Weather:** Expect daytime highs in the 70Fs in winter, and in the mid- to high 80Fs in the summer. **Water Conditions:** Temperatures drop into the high 70Fs in winter and peak in the low 80Fs in summer. Visibility varies from 80 to 200 feet, with peak water clarity occurring during the calm summer months. Bring at least a Lycra skin or 1mm wetsuit to ward off abrasions. You're almost never totally blown out of diving in the Cayman Islands. On the Sister Islands, you'll be able to go north or south, and the beauty of Grand Cayman is that there's always a lee. **Electricity:** Bring all your electronics—voltage and plugs are the same as in the U.S. and Canada. **Money:** U.S. greenbacks are accepted everywhere, but you'll likely get change in Cayman Islands dollars, which are roughly equal to \$1.25. **Just in Case:** Grand Cayman has a recompression chamber staffed 24 hours a day (949-2989). **For More Info:** Call the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, (800) 346-3313, or visit them on the web at divecayman.ky or caymanislands.ky. **Dive Operators:** For a list of dive operators, plus comprehensive travel guides, special dive deals and recent trip reports submitted by users, go to www.scubadiving.com/tripfinder.



LIGHT SPEED, P. 50 • OTHER FINS TESTED

APOLLO SPORTS Uni The new Uni takes the successful Bio-Fin blade and puts it on a full-foot pocket. The fin is stable on straight courses and corners well. All-natural rubber makes it soft and comfortable, although foot pocket sizing runs a bit large.

AQUA LUNG Caravelle This new fin is lightweight and comfortable. The somewhat stiff thermoplastic blade is bordered with rubber for protection. It's stable at depth and a delight when using the dolphin kick.

DACOR DXD While it doesn't burn up the test courses, testers tend to like the DXD. It's a very comfortable fin that offers very good accel-

eration, although it tops out relatively quickly. A better performer in open water than around reefs, the DXD has Optimized Pivoting Blade technology.

GENESIS SCUBA Navigator The Navigator's somewhat stiff, longer-than-average blade produces very good power, speed and stability, but tends to be a little too much for close-quarter diving, especially for women.

MARES Volo Race This sexy Italian fin offers substance and style. It has a comfortable foot pocket, and is stable and fast. It also provides great control in the turns—it's one of only three fins to earn a "very good" maneuverability rating. Like

the DXD, it uses OPB technology.

SCUBAPRO Twin Speed This new full-foot performs efficiently on test courses and in real-world diving situations. It's a comfortable fin—the foot pockets are cut low, like an Italian shoe—and provides very good acceleration and stability.

SPORASUB Variant Master It's not just a fin but a fin "system," which allows you to mix different blades with foot pockets. This year, Sporasub submitted the Master blade, which is shorter than the Carbon we tested last year. Like the Carbon, the Master is best suited to free diving or open-water scuba diving. Its length makes it unwieldy around reefs and not very maneuverable.

For more information:

AERIS

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www.apollosportsusa.com

AQUA LUNG

www.aqualung.com

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Full-Foot Fins: Features & Performance

S P E C S							P E R F O R M A N C E							
	PRICE	FIN STYLE	FOOT POCKETS	SIZES	MADE IN	WARRANTY	MOST IMPORTANT		MODERATELY IMPORTANT			CONVENIENCE ELEMENTS		
							POWER VS. STRESS	STABILITY	ACCELERATION	FIT & COMFORT	ALT. KICKS	SURFACE SWIM	DONNING / DOFFING	NONSKID
 AERIS Velocity	\$49.95	Paddle	Open toe	7	Italy	2 years	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	
APOLLO SPORTS Uni	\$100	Split	Open toe	4	Japan	Limited lifetime	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4
AQUA LUNG Caravelle	\$40	Paddle	Open toe	6	Italy	2-year limited	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4
DACOR DXD	\$79.95	Paddle	Open toe	3	Italy	1 year	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4
GENESIS SCUBA Navigator	\$70	Paddle	Open toe	5	Italy	2-year limited	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
 MARES Plana Avanti Tre	\$59	Paddle	Open toe	6	Estonia	1 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
MARES Volo Race	\$89.95	Paddle	Open toe	6	Italy	1 year	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4
 OCEANIC Caribe	\$44.95	Paddle	Open toe	6	Italy	1 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
 OCEANIC Vortex V6	\$99.95	Split	Open toe	5	Italy	1 year	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
 SCUBAPRO Twin Jet (Black)	\$138	Split	Open toe	5	USA	Limited lifetime	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
SCUBAPRO Twin Speed	\$65	Split	Open toe	5	Italy	Limited lifetime	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
SPORASUB Variant Master	\$219	Paddle	Open toe	4	Italy	1 year	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3

RATING SYSTEM: 5=EXCELLENT 4=VERY GOOD 3=GOOD 2=FAIR 1=POOR

MOST IMPORTANT

Power vs. Stress. The perception of power produced vs. effort required.
Stability. How much the fins wobble, slice from side to side or hit each other during the kick cycle.
Acceleration. During an underwater swim, the ability to quickly pick up speed.

MODERATELY IMPORTANT

Fit & Comfort. Of foot pocket.
Alternate Kicks. Ease and effectiveness of frog and dolphin kicks.
Surface Swim. Both face-down and while on the back.

CONVENIENCE ELEMENTS

Donning/Doffing. Prior to dive, after the dive.
Non-Skid. The sense of security on a wet boat deck geared up while wearing fins.

HOW TESTERS' CHOICES ARE CHOSEN: ScubaLab Testers' Choices are based on adjusted scores for ergonomic performance (actual scores x 3 for "Most Important" categories, actual scores x 2 for "Moderately Important" categories, and actual scores x 1 for "Convenience Elements"), plus numerical scores for speed, slalom course times and maneuverability.

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4



10 THINGS TO DO IN CHICAGO, P. 41 • Dive Conditions: Diving season lasts from spring until the fall gales, when it truly becomes the Windy City. Mid-summer surface temperatures can rise to the low 70Fs, but a serious thermocline will slap you in the face with a 20-degree drop as you head down. Vis varies from five to 50 feet. **Dive Charters:** Chicago Dive Charter, (312) 842-1480, web: www.chicagodivecharter.com; Discovery Dive Charters, (815) 786-1337. **Dry Suit Diving:** Underwater Safaris, web: www.uwsafaris.com; Scuba Emporium, web: www.scubaemporium.com. **Rachel Carson Scuba Park:** web: www.serve.com/rcsc/Park.htm. **Museum of Science and Industry/Coral Reef Adventure:** 57th Street and Lake Shore Drive, (773) 684-1414, web: www.msichicago.org. **Blues Festival:** Read about who played at the 2003 festival at www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents/Festivals/Blues2003. **Chicago Cubs Baseball Game:** web: www.chicagocubs.com. **Eat a Chicago Hot Dog:** Portillo's Hot Dogs, 100 W. Ontario, (312) 587-8910, web: www.portillos.com. **Shedd Aquarium's Wild Reef Exhibit:** web: www.shedd.org. **Our World-Underwater:** web: www.ourworldunderwater.com. **For More Information:** Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau, web: www.chicago.il.org; Dive Chicago, web: www.divechicago.com.

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REPUBLIC, P. 56 • Water Conditions: Water temps range from the high 70Fs to the mid-80Fs. The Caribbean is generally calmer than the Atlantic off the north shore, and consequently better visibility is the norm. **Entry Requirements:** For U.S. citizens, a valid passport or original birth certificate and picture ID. A tourist card (U.S.\$10) must be purchased. Departure tax is \$10. **Money Matters:** The Dominican peso fluctuates relative to the U.S.; generally, about 16 pesos to the dollar. **Time Zone:** Atlantic Standard; daylight saving time is not observed. **Electricity:** 110 volts/60 cycles, same as in the U.S. **Just in Case:** There are recompression chambers in Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata. **For More Information:** Call the Ministry of Tourism at (800) 752-1151, web: www.dominicanrepublic.com/Tourism. **Dive Operators:** Circe Watersports Adventures, (866) 882-4723, web: www.circe-watersports.com; Coral Hotels, (800) 288-1332, web: www.waterhouse-tours.com; Dressel Divers Club/Iberostar, (888) 923-2722, web: www.dresseldivers.com; Neptuno Dive Center, (809) 526-2005, web: www.neptunodive.com; Samana Dive Center/El Portillo Beach Resort, (800) 550-1869, web: www.portillo-resort.com; Scubacaribe, (809) 552-1435, web: www.scubacaribe.com; Sea Pro Divers/Puerto Plata Village (800) 753-8260, web: www.seaprodivers.com; Treasure Divers/Don Juan Beach Resort, (800) 820-1631, web: www.treasuredivers.de.

6



KAYAK DIVING, P. 62 • Resources

- > **www.kayakdiving.com.** A soup-to-nuts instructional book on CD-ROM by Mark Theobald. Comprehensive, authoritative.
- > **www.whidbeydive.com.** More instructional for kayak divers from Henry Powers.
- > **www.kayakdiver.com.** Jim Spears offers advice, mostly on equipment and set-up.
- > **www.americanwatersports.com/kayak-diving.html.** General and brief safety advice.
- > **www.kayuba.com.** Site for the Ft. Lauderdale kayak diving club. (In your area, check local dive clubs. Many have subsections for kayak divers.)
- > **www.sit-on-topkayaking.com.** Among other things, specs on 42 sit-on-top kayaks from 14 manufacturers.

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CURRENTS, P. 22 • Hiker's Guide to Dominica: Dominica Tours can arrange diving and any of the island's hikes. (767) 448-0990; www.anchoragehotel.dm/anchor-tours.htm. **Tip:** Emerald Pool can get crowded when cruise ships call, but if you go after 3 p.m. you might have the pool all to yourself. **For more information:** Dominica National Development Corporation (Tourism Department), (767) 448-2045, www.dominica.dm.

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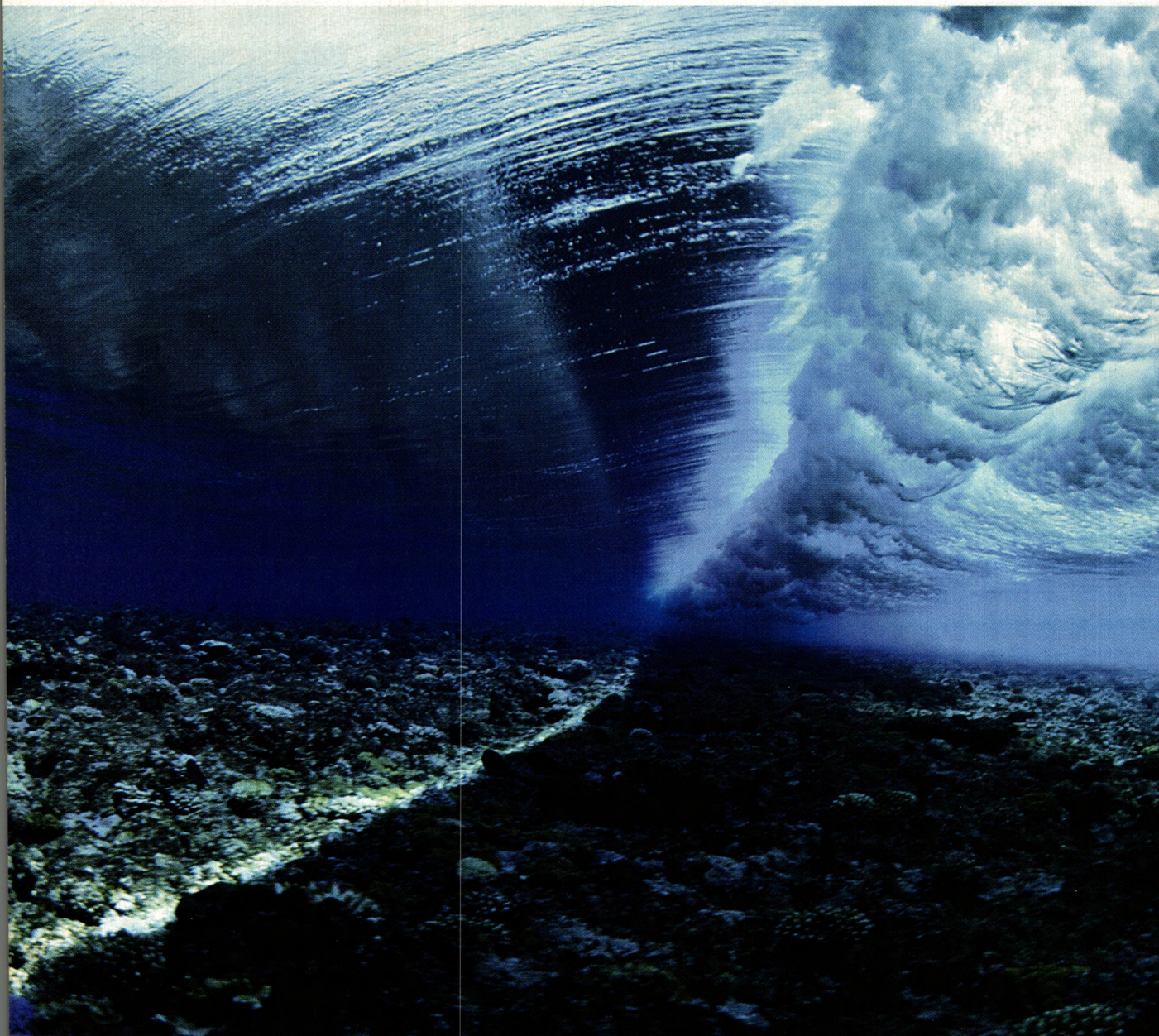
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LOOK



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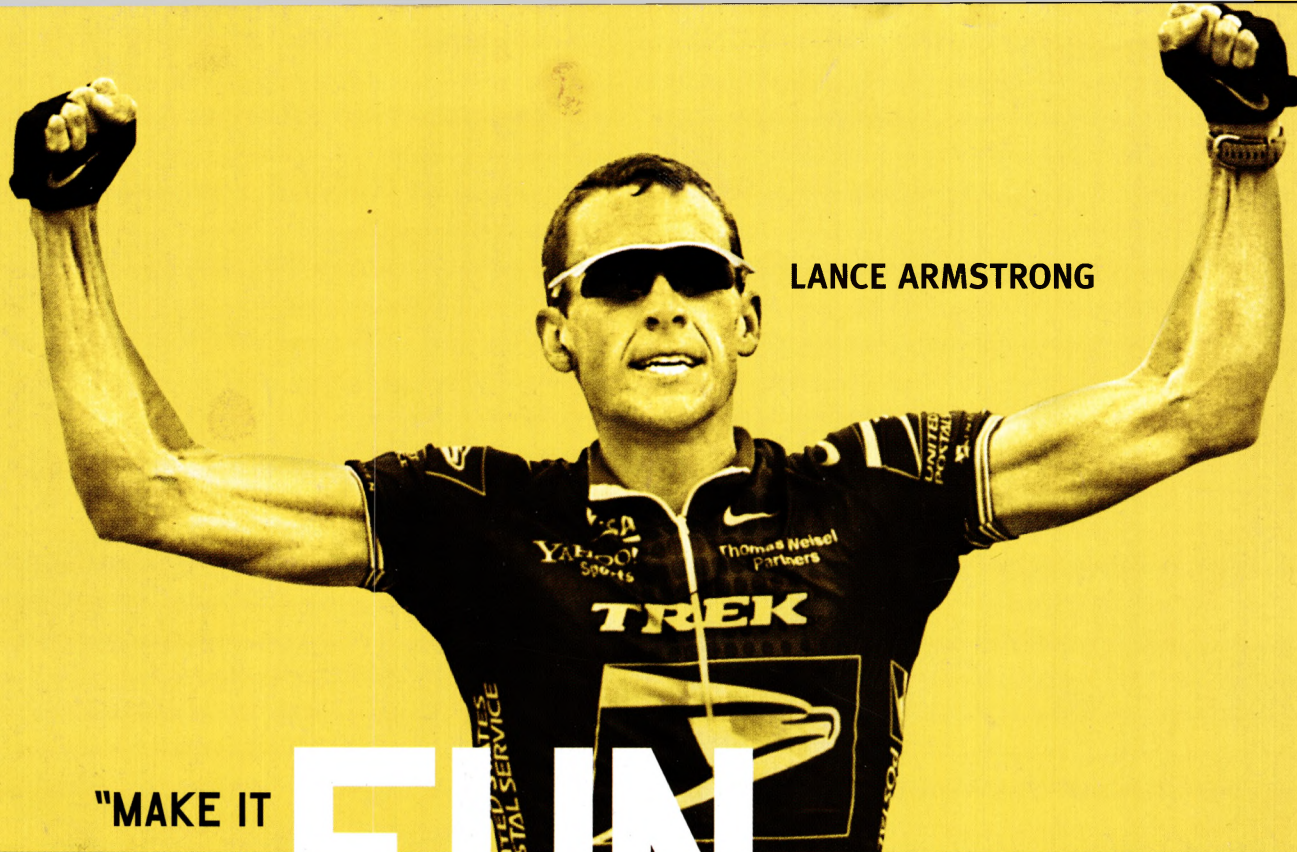
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